فضل علم السلف على علم الخلف

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PREDECESSORS OVER THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUCCESSORS

أبي الفرج زين الدين عبد الرحمن بن أحمد
الشهير بابن رجب البغدادي الحنبلي

By Imaam Abul-Faraj Zayn-ud-Deen
'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Ahmad, better known as,
Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee [D. 795H]

With Verification and Notes from the works of Imaam
Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen Al-Albaanee

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Publisher's Foreword

All praise is for Allaah, Lord of all that exists, and may His praises and peace be on our Prophet, Muhammad, as well as his family and Companions.

To proceed:

This is the third book in the **"Classical Knowledge Series"** which is a collection of works written by the scholars of the past on the virtues, etiquettes and aspects of knowledge. This particular book written by the great scholar, Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab, is one of the well known works authored on the subject.

In spite of its small size, the treatise brings to light many amazing and intricate points of benefit with regard to knowledge and discerning between which of its types are beneficial and non-beneficial. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ praised some forms of knowledge while condemning others. And at times he would ask Allaah to grant him beneficial knowledge while at other times he would seek refuge in Him from non-beneficial knowledge.

It is for this reason that the author took on the task of clarifying the various types, characteristics, signs and consequences of both beneficial knowledge and non-beneficial knowledge in this short treatise, as well as affirming the superiority of the knowledge of the predecessors (Salaf) over the knowledge of those who succeeded them (Khalaf).

Altogether, this is a splendid and remarkable book – loaded with reminders and admonitions and designed to assist and guide any sincere Muslim in his quest for seeking knowledge.

Three publications of the book were used for this present translation. The main publication that was relied on was the *Dar-ul-Imaam Ahmad*, Egypt 2005 Edition with verification of narrations based on the works of Imaam Muhammad Naasir-ud-Deen Al-Albaanee. It is important to note that all section headings were added by that publisher – not by the author or translator – in order to assist the reader.

Verification and referencing of narrations not covered by the *Dar-ul-Imaam Ahmad* edition were taken from the *Dar-ul-Bashaa'ir-ul-Islaamiyyah* edition

from the footnotes of Muhammad bin Naasir Al-'Ajamee and noted with an [A] for [Al-'Ajamee] at the end of the footnote to distinguish this source from the previous one.

Furthermore, all biographical accounts of the Salaf (excluding the Sahaabah) found in this book were taken from the footnotes of the *Dar-ul-Hadeeth,* Egypt 1989 edition with the notes of Muhammad 'Abdul-Hakeem Al-Qaadee. No indications were made to distinguish his words as it is evident the biographical accounts are his notes.

Therefore, this work is a combination of the above sources and employs footnotes from all three of these works so as to make this English publication as beneficial and resourceful as possible.

Finally, the last part of the book contains another treatise from Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab called *Dhamm Qaswat-il-Qalb* or **"A Condemnation of the Hardening of the Heart."** This small treatise was added as a supplement since the author touches upon this subject in the last part of his treatise *Fadlu 'Ilm-is-Salaf 'alaa 'Ilm-il-Khalaf* (**The Superiority of the Knowledge of the Predecessors over the Knowledge of the Successors**).

The source used for the translation of this short treatise was the one found in the *Maktabah Awlaad-ush-Shaikh Lit-Turaath* edition which is a compilation of several of Imaam Ibn Rajab's treatises in two volumes with notes and verifications by Naasir An-Najjaar. It is a complete translation of the treatise with the exception of some poetic lines written by the author.

We hope that this publication serves as a benefit for the Muslims and an encouragement and inspiration for them to seek knowledge and abide by its proper etiquettes.

Al-Ibaanah Book Publishing

A Biography of the Author

His Name and Lineage:
He was Abul-Faraj Zayn-ud-Deen 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Ahmad bin 'Abdir-Rahmaan (a.k.a. Rajab) bin Al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin Abil-Barakaat Mas'ood As-Salaamee Al-Baghdaadee Ad-Dimashqee Al-Hanbalee, better known as Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee.

His scholarly title was Zayn-ud-Deen or "The Adornment of the Religion" and he went by the nickname of Ibn Rajab – an ascription to his grandfather, 'Abdur-Rahmaan, who was known as Rajab since he was born in that month. He ascribed himself to Baghdad because that was where he was born; to Dimashq (Damascus) because that was were he settled; and to Hanbal, because that was the scholar whose jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) he adhered to.

He was the great Imaam, the Haafidh, the Critic, the Shaikh of the Hanbalee jurists in his time, reviver of the Sunnah, defender of Islam and devout worshipper of Allaah.

His Birth and Upbringing:
He was born in Baghdad in 736H according to the most correct view. His birth took place nearly eighty years after the fall of Baghdad, the metropolis of knowledge at that time, at the hands of the Mongols. And the effects of the devastation were still present even at the time of Ibn Rajab's birth.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab was raised in a pious household that was firmly rooted in knowledge, nobility and righteousness. His grandfather, 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Al-Hasan, was one of the scholars of Baghdad who had a circle in which he would teach students Hadeeth using an ancient method for memorization. Ibn Rajab would attend these lessons of his grandfather on several occasions even though he was just 4-5 years old.

As for his father, he was also a scholar and Muhaddith, well-known for his knowledge and virtue. He was born in 706H and grew up in Baghdad where he studied under its scholars and teachers. He traveled to Damascus with his children in 744H in order to learn from its scholars. He did the same by traveling afterward to the Hijaaz area and then to Jerusalem. After this, he settled down in Damascus to teach.

His Travels in Search of Knowledge:

His father played the greatest role in directing his son towards beneficial knowledge, especially that of Hadeeth. This was since he always strove to place his son in an environment where he could hear Hadeeth from trustworthy people who were known throughout the Muslim lands for their narrations.

In 744H, his father took him with him to Damascus to learn from its scholars. At that time, Damascus was a center of learning that students would flock to in order to increase their knowledge and progress in their studies. There, Ibn Rajab heard from scholars the likes of Muhammad bin Isma'eel Al-Khabbaaz and Ibraaheem bin Dawood Al-'Attaar.

Then Ibn Rajab and his father traveled to Egypt where they learned from 'Izz-ud-Deen bin Jamaa'ah [D. 767H]. Ibn Rajab also studied under Sadr-ud-Deen Al-Maydoomee [D. 754H] and Ibn Al-Mulook [D. 756H].

After this in 748H, they returned to Baghdad and heard from other scholars. They then traveled to Jerusalem where Ibn Rajab learned from Al-Haafidh Al-'Alaa'ee [D. 761H]. In 749H, they traveled to Makkah where they performed Hajj (pilgrimage). While in Makkah, Ibn Rajab studied under Al-Fakhr 'Uthmaan bin Yoosuf. Then he moved on to Madeenah and heard from its Haafidh and historian, 'Afeef-ud-Deen Al-Khazrajee [D. 765H].

After this, he returned to Damascus and devoted himself to studentship under the great scholar, Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, studying closely with him until his death in 751H. As mentioned before, when his father went back to Damascus, he settled down to teach and give lessons. So Ibn Rajab would also attend these lessons.

His Teachers:

It is clear from the above that Ibn Rajab learned and took knowledge from the greatest scholars of the ummah at his time. In Damascus, he studied under Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, Zayn-ud-Deen al-'Iraaqee, Ibn An-Naqeeb, Muhammad Al-Khabbaaz, Dawood At-'Ataar, Ibn Qaadee Al-Jabal and Ahmad bin 'Abdil-Haadee Al-Hanbalee. In Makkah, he heard from Al-Fakhr 'Uthmaan bin Yoosuf An-Nuwairee. In Jerusalem, he heard from Al-Haafidh Al-'Alaa'ee. And in Egypt, he heard from Sadr-ud-Deen Abul-Fath Al-Maydoomee and Naasir-ud-Deen bin Al-Mulook.

Those who have recorded Imaam Ibn Rajab's biography have counted his teachers to number close to forty. This includes of course his father, Shihaab-ud-Deen Abul-'Abbaas Ahmad bin 'Abdir-Rahmaan, who was his first and most influential teacher.

His Role in Teaching and His Educational Positions:

After returning to Damascus, Imaam Ibn Rajab continued to seek knowledge while his father began to hold circles for Hadeeth memorization. This was up until 774H when his father passed away. At this point, Ibn Rajab concluded his studying under teachers and his attending of lessons and devoted himself to researching issues, writing books and spreading knowledge.

He was given a teaching position in the Hanbalee School which he held until 791H. He was then put in charge of the Tuesday study circle held at the Grand Mosque of Banee Umayyah. This was an exclusive position which only the major scholars of the Hanbalee *madh-hab* would hold. He assumed this role after the death of Ibn Qaadee Al-Jabal who passed away in 771H.

He continued to spend large amounts of time researching, writing, authoring, teaching, working in the field of knowledge and issuing legal rulings. The end result of this was the production of numerous works that continue to benefit the Muslim ummah up to this very day.

His Students:

After settling in Damascus and after the death of his father, Ibn Rajab began to hold lessons and study circles. Since he was an Imaam in the Science of Hadeeth – in terms of reporting and investigating – people came to him from far and near in order to hear narrations from him. He had spent so much time engrossed in studying Hadeeth that he became known particularly for it. And along with this, there was no one found more proficient in it (during his lifetime) other than him.

Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab had numerous students, the most famous of whom were: The Judge 'Alaa-ud-Deen Abul-Hasan, Ibn Al-Lihaam al-Ba'alee Ad-Dimashqee [D. 803H], who was the closest of his students to him; Shihaab-ud-Deen Abul-'Abbaas Ahmad bin Abee Bakr Al-Hamawee Al-Hanbalee, better known as Ibn Ar-Risaam [D. 844H] whom Ibn Rajab gave *ijaazah*

(authorization); and Abu Dharr 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Muhammad Al-Misree Az-Zarkashee [D. 846H].

The Scholars' Praise for him:

Ibn Qaadee Shuhbah said of him in his biography, as stated in *al-Jawhar-ul-Munaddad* (pg. 48): "He read and became proficient in the various fields of science. He engrossed himself with the issues of the *(Hanbalee) madh-hab* to the point that he mastered it. He devoted himself to the occupation of knowledge of the texts, defects and meanings of the Hadeeth. And he was unique in the books he produced."

Ibn Hajr said of him in *Inbaa-ul-Ghamr:* "He was highly proficient in the scientific disciplines of Hadeeth in terms of the names of reporters, their biographies, their paths of narration and awareness of their meanings."

Ibraaheem bin Muhammad Ibn Muflih [D. 884H] said of him: "He was the Shaikh, the great scholar, the Haafidh, the one who abstained from the worldly life. He was the Shaikh of the Hanbalee *madh-hab* and he wrote many beneficial books."

The famous Muslim historian, Ibn Hijjee, said: "He mastered the disciplines and became the most knowledgeable one of his time of the defects (of Hadeeth) and of researching their paths of narration."

Ibn Naasir-ud-Deen said: "The Shaikh, the Imaam, the great scholar, the ascetic, the example, the blessing, the Haafidh, the trustworthy, the authority...one of the abstemious Imaams and worshipping scholars."

His Piety and Characteristics:

Imaam Ibn Rajab was well known for his meticulous abstemiousness and piety, as he was one of those who renounced the worldly life and immersed himself in knowledge and worship.

Ibn Fahd Al-Makkee said: "He, may Allaah have mercy on him, was a pious and abstemious Imaam. The hearts inclined towards him with love and the various groups united in acceptance of him. His gatherings for reminding the people were of great benefit and used to open the hearts."

Adh-Dhahabee said about him: "Our teacher, he was one of the pious scholars, from those who renounced the worldly life and abandoned positions. This was since he would speak out the truth even if it was bitter."

His Creed:

Ibn Rajab, may Allaah have mercy on him, followed the methodology of the Salaf with regard to the issues of Creed and Eemaan. And he supported it and defended it from the false arguments of the opponents. His books are loaded with examples of that as is the case with this treatise *"Fadlu 'Ilm-is-Salaf 'alaa 'Ilm-il-Khalaf"* in which he said: "The correct view is that which the pious predecessors (*Salaf as-Saalih*) were upon, which is leaving the verses and *ahaadeeth* containing Allaah's Attributes as they were reported without trying to explain them (*tafseer*), describe their meaning (*takyeef*) or make comparisons to them (*tamtheel*)."

His *Madh-hab* with regard to Fiqh (Jurisprudence):

In Fiqh, Ibn Rajab followed the *madh-hab* of the venerable Imaam, Ahmad bin Hanbal. In fact, he is considered one of the major scholars of this *madh-hab*, being highly proficient and well-versed in it. What proves this is his book *"al-Qawaa'id-ul-Kubraa fil-Furoo'"* – one of his most prominent works on the subject of Fiqh – which shows his vast knowledge on the most intricate issues of jurisprudence. Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr said in his book *ad-Durar*: "He did excellent work in it." And Ibn Qaadee Shuhbah and Ibn Muflih said: "It demonstrates his comprehensive knowledge of the (Hanbalee) *madh-hab*."

In *Kashf-udh-Dhunoon* it states: "It is one of the amazing books of all time since it is highly regarded. Some claim that he took the (juristic) principles of Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah that were scattered (throughout his writings) and gathered them together, but that is not the case. Rather, he was above that. This is what was said."

Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab was deeply attached to the works of Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah, for he would issue legal rulings according to them and would constantly reference his books. The reason for this was because he served as a student under Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, the most outstanding student of Shaikh-ul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah, may Allah have mercy on all of them. However, in spite of this, Imaam Ibn Rajab was not a blind follower or a fanatical adherent to his teacher or his teacher's teacher. Rather, he would review, authenticate, verify and follow the evidences.

His Written Works:

Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab was considered one of the most able and famous scholars in his time at writing. This is why he left behind an extensive and rich selection of books on the various sciences of Islaam including Tafseer, Hadeeth, Fiqh, History and Admonitions.

Amongst his works are those that have been published and those that remain in manuscript form. He also wrote some books that cannot be found today. In total, the books of Ibn Rajab have been estimated to be around sixty works, ranging from small treatises to large volumes, most of which have been published. Some of his famous works include:

1. *Sharh Jaami' at-Tirmidhee,* An Explanation of *Sunan At-Tirmidhee*: This was an amazing explanation consisting of almost twenty volumes as mentioned by Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr. It is said that it was burned in Damascus during the invasion of the Tartars in 803H led by Timurlank. So unfortunately it was lost and nothing remains from it except ten pages from the Book of Garments and the last section of it on Defects (*'Ilal*), which was published in two volumes several times.

2. *Fath-ul-Baaree bi-Sharh Saheeh-il-Bukhaaree,* The Success of Allaah in Explaining Al-Bukhaaree's *Saheeh* Collection: This is an amazing explanation of Imaam Al-Bukhaaree's *Saheeh* which unfortunately was not completed. The author was only able to reach the Chapter on Funerals. Ibn Naasir-ud-Deen Ad-Dimashqee referred to it as a "valuable explanation." It has been published today and consists of seven volumes.

3. *Jaami'-ul-'Uloom wal-Hikam fee Sharh Khamseena Hadeethan min Jawaami'-il-Kalim,* A Collection of Points of Knowledge and Wisdom in Explaining 50 *Ahaadeeth* from the Prophet's Comprehensive Statements: This is his well-known explanation of An-Nawawee's 40 Hadeeth, in which the author added 8 more ahaadeeth at the end to complete the number 50, and explained each hadeeth in detailed form. This is truly one of his prized works and it has been published numerous times.

4. *Dhail 'alaa Tabaqaat-il-Hanaabilah,* A Supplement to the book Generations of the Hanbalee Scholars: This was his famous biographical index which was written as a supplement (*dhail*) to Al-Qaadee Abu Ya'laa's collection, *Tabaqaat-il-Hanaabilah*. It contains biographies of the eminent Hanbalee scholars from the time of Abu Ya'laa's death in 526H to Ibn Rajab's time.

5. *Lataa'if-ul-Ma'aarif feemaa Li-Mawaasim-il-'Aam min al-Wadhaa'if,* Intricate Points of Knowledge on the Duties required throughout the Seasons of the Year: A great work, published many times.

6. *Al-Farq baynan-Naseehah wat-Ta'yeer,* The Difference between Advising and Condemning: A small treatise available on Al-Ibaanah.Com.

7. *Adh-Dhull wal-Inkisaar Lil-'Azeez-il-Jabbaar,* Submitting and Humbling oneself to the All-Mighty, the Compeller: This book has also been published under the title *al-Khushoo' fis-Salaat* (Submissiveness in Prayer). One should note they are the same book.

8. *Sharh Hadeeth Maa Dhi'baani Jaa'iaan ursilaa fee Ghanam,* Explanation of the Hadeeth: Two Hungry Wolves: This treatise has also been published under the title *Dhamm-ul-Maal wal-Jaah* or The Evil of Craving for Wealth & Status.

9. *Kashf-ul-Kurbah fee Wasfi Haali Ahlil-Ghurbah,* Alleviating Grievances in Describing the Condition of the Strangers: Available on Al-Ibaanah.Com.

His Death:

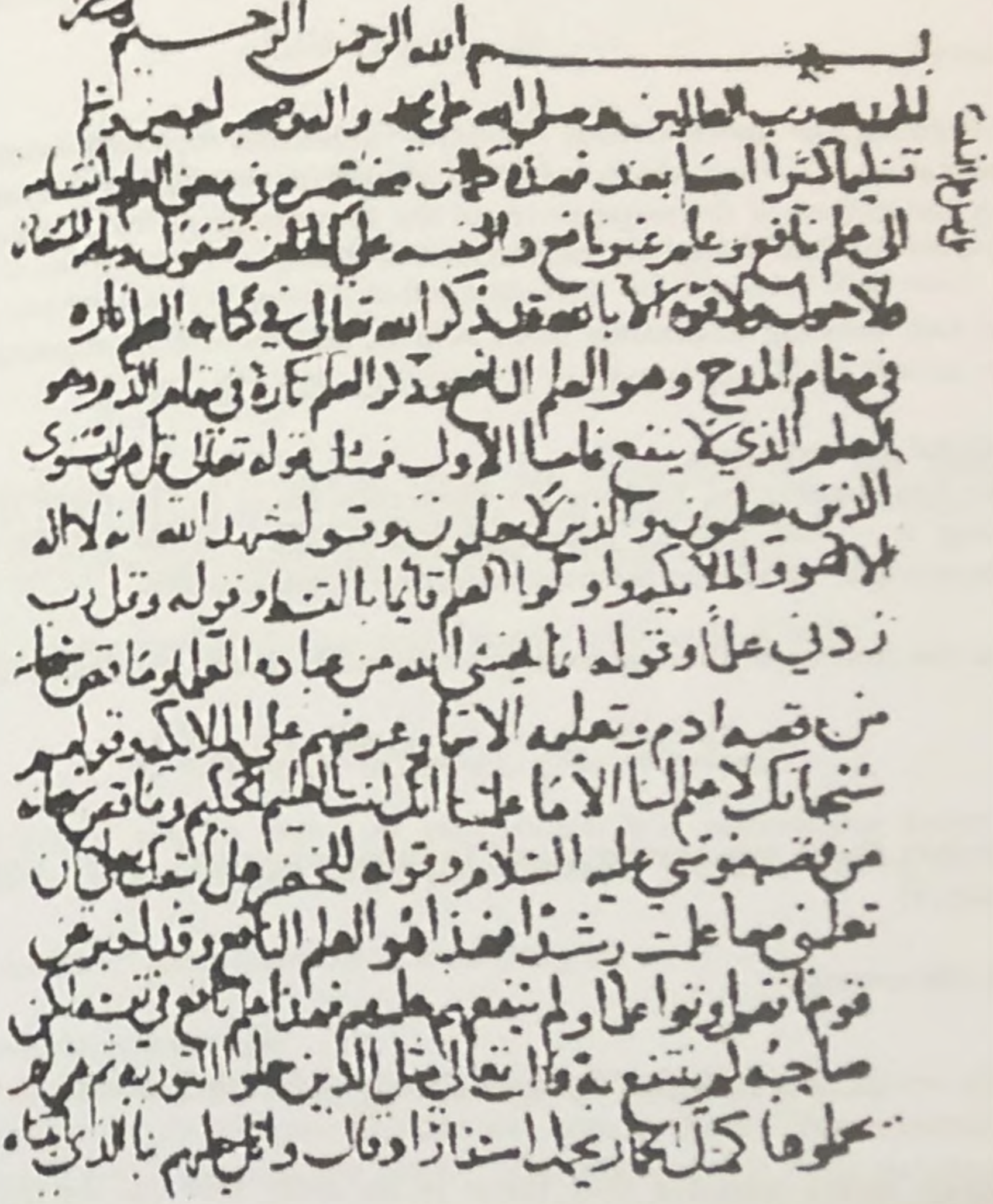
Ibn Rajab traveled again to Egypt in 754H and then made Hajj in 763H. After this, he returned to Damascus where he remained until his death. He passed away on a Monday night, the fourth of Ramadan, in 795H. Some historians say it was in the month of Rajab.

He died in Damascus in a land called al-Humairiyyah in a garden he used to rent. His funeral prayer was performed the next day and he was buried in the Baab-us-Sagheer graveyard next to the grave of 'Abdul-Waahid bin Muhammad Ash-Sheeraazee (D. 486H), one of the well-known Hanbalee scholars of the past, due to his requesting that in his will.

No doubt he left behind him a legacy of knowledge for all those after him to benefit from. His books continue to be studied and used as reference even today. May Allaah have mercy on him and grant him a high place in Paradise.

First Page of the Original Manuscript

الوجه الأول من الورقة الأولى من نسخة (ش)



This is a copy of the first page of one of the original manuscripts. This particular one is found in the Chester Beatty Library (Ireland) amongst a group of books under no. 3292 and consists of 18 pages with 16-17 lines on each page. Other manuscripts can be found in Istanbul, Riyadh and Baghdad.

Introduction to the Treatise

My Lord, assist me, You are the Most Generous.

All praise is for Allaah, Lord of all that exists, and may the peace and praises of Allaah be on Muhammad, his family, and all of his Companions.

To proceed:

These are some brief words on the definition of knowledge, its categorization into that which is beneficial and that which is not beneficial, and an indication of the superiority of the knowledge of the predecessors (*Salaf*) over the knowledge of the successors (*Khalaf*).

So we say, seeking assistance from Allaah, and there is no movement or power except by His Leave:

Beneficial Knowledge:
Allaah has mentioned knowledge numerous times in His Book, at times praising it – and this is beneficial knowledge – while at other times condemning it – and this is knowledge that doesn't benefit.

As for the first type, then an example of it can be found in Allaah's saying:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

"Say: Are those who know equal to those who don't know." [Surah Az-Zumar: 9]

And His saying:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَـٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ

"Allaah bears witness that there is no deity that has the right to be worshipped except Him. And so do the angels and those with knowledge (bear witness to this). He is always maintaining His creation with justice." [Surah Aali 'Imraan: 18]

And His saying:

وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

"And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge." *[Surah TaHa: 114]*

And His saying:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء

"Verily, it is only those who fear Allaah from among His servants who are the scholars." *[Surah Faatir: 28]*

There is also the story of Aadam, when Allaah taught him the names of all things and how he presented it to the angels, at which point they said:

سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

"Glorified are you (O Allaah) from all imperfections! We have no knowledge except for what knowledge You have given us. Verily, You are the All-Knowing, Most Wise." *[Surah Al-Baqarah: 32]*

There is also the story of Moosaa and what he said to Al-Khidr:

هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَى أَن تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا

"May I follow you so that you may teach me something from the guidance that you have been taught (by Allaah)?" [Surah Al-Kahf: 66]

All of these verses refer to beneficial knowledge.

Non-Beneficial Knowledge:

Allaah has also informed us about groups of people that were given knowledge, but yet their knowledge did not benefit them. This is beneficial knowledge in itself, however, the person who possesses it does not benefit from it. Allaah says:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَاةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا

"The example of those who were entrusted with carrying the Torah, but then failed to carry it out (i.e. implement its obligations) is like the example of a donkey that carries loads of books (but does not benefit from them)." [Surah Al-Jumu'ah: 5]

And He says:

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ الَّذِي آتَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا فَانسَلَخَ مِنْهَا فَأَتْبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

"And recite (O Muhammad) to them the story of he unto whom We gave Our signs, but yet threw them away. So the Devil followed him and he became of those who went astray." [Surah Al-A'raaf: 175]

And He says:

فَخَلَفَ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرِثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَٰذَا الْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا وَإِن يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ

"Then they were succeeded by a generation after them who inherited the Book, but they chose (for themselves) the goods of this lowly life, saying: '(Everything) will be forgiven for us.' And if (again) the offer of the likes (of this world) came to them, they would seize it (i.e. commit those sins)." [Surah Al-A'raaf: 169]

And He says:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ

"Have you seen he who takes his own desires as his god, and Allaah led him astray in spite of his knowledge." [Surah Al-Jaathiyah: 23]

This is based on the interpretation of the one who reads the verse to mean knowledge on the part of the one whom Allaah leads astray (as opposed to knowledge from Allaah).

As for the types of knowledge that Allaah mentions whilst completely condemning them (from all angles), then we have the example of His statement concerning magic:

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَٰكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّىٰ يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُم بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَاقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

"They followed what the devils gave out (falsely of magic) during the reign of Sulaymaan. Sulaymaan did not disbelieve but rather the devils disbelieved, teaching men magic and such things that came down at Babylon to the two angels, Haroot and Maroot. But neither of these two (angels) taught anyone (such things) until they (first) said: 'We are only a trial, so do not commit disbelief (by learning this magic from us).' And from these (angels), people learned how to cause separation between a man and his wife, but they could not harm anyone except by Allaah's permission. And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And indeed they knew that the buyers of it (magic) would have no share in the Hereafter. And how bad indeed was that for which they sold their own selves, if they but knew." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 103]

And He says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِندَهُم مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ

"So when their Messengers came to them with clear proofs, they were proud of what they had with them of knowledge, and that which they used to mock, surrounded them (i.e. punishment)." [Surah Al-Ghaafir: 83]

And He says:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

"They know only the outside appearance of the life of the world (i.e. the matters of their livelihood), whereas they are heedless of the Hereafter." [Surah Ar- Room: 7]

Asking Allaah for Beneficial Knowledge:

It is for this reason that the Sunnah clearly relates the division of knowledge into (1) that which is beneficial and (2) that which is not beneficial, as well as the encouragement to (1) seek refuge from knowledge that does not benefit and (2) ask for knowledge that does benefit.

In *Saheeh Muslim*,[1] Zayd bin Arqam ﷺ reported that the Prophet ﷺ would say:

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من علم لا ينفع ومن قلب لا
يخشع ومن نفس لا تشبع ومن دعوة لا يستجاب لها

"O Allaah, indeed, I seek refuge in You from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not submit, from a soul that is not satisfied and from a supplication that is not answered." [2]

The compilers of the *Sunan* have also reported this hadeeth through numerous chains of narration from the Prophet ﷺ. In some narrations, it reads:

ومن دعاء لا يسمع

"...and from a supplication that is not heard." [3]

In other narrations, it reads:

أعوذ بك من هؤلاء الأربع

"I seek refuge in You from these four things." [4]

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[1] He was Abul-Hasan Muslim bin Al-Hajaaj Al-Qushairee An-Naisapuree, one of the great scholars of Hadeeth. He was born in 204H and began studying the Science of Hadeeth while very young. He heard from the teachers of Al-Bukhaaree as well as others and authored numerous beneficial books, the most important of which was *Saheeh Muslim*. He died in 261H and was buried in Naisapur.

[2] **Saheeh:** Reported by Muslim (no. 2088 & 2722), Abu Dawood (1548), At-Tirmidhee (4382), Ibn Maajah (250), An-Nasaa'ee (8/255) and others.

[3] **Saheeh:** Reported by Abu Dawood (1548), An-Nasaa'ee (5536) and Ibn Maajah (250) from Abu Hurairah ﷺ; Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (1297).

[4] **Saheeh:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (3482) and An-Nasaa'ee (5442) from 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr ﷺ; Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (1297).

An-Nasaa'ee[5] reported from Jaabir ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ would say:

اللهم إني أسألك علماً نافعاً وأعوذ بك من علم لا ينفع

"O Allaah, I indeed ask you for beneficial knowledge and I seek refuge in You from knowledge that doesn't benefit." [6]

Ibn Maajah[7] also reported this hadeeth with the wording from the Prophet:

سلوا الله علماً نافعاً و تعوذوا بالله من علم لا ينفع

"Ask Allaah for beneficial knowledge and seek refuge in Allaah from knowledge that doesn't benefit." [8]

At-Tirmidhee reported from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ would say:

اللهم انفعني بما علمتني وعلمني ما ينفعني وزدني علما

"O Allaah, benefit me with what You have taught me, and teach me that which will benefit me. And increase me in knowledge." [9]

An-Nasaa'ee reported from Anas ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ would supplicate, saying:

اللهم انفعني بما علمتني وعلمني ما ينفعني وارزقني علماً تنفعني به

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[5] He was Ahmad bin Shu'aib Al-Khurasaanee. His ascription is to Nasaa (with a *fat'ha* on the *noon*), a city in Khurasaan. Adh-Dhahabee mentioned that he was born in 215H. He was one of the Imaams of Hadeeth, distinguished by his unique understanding, precision, and preference for the closest chains of narration. He died in 303H in Ramlah and was buried in Jerusalem.

[6] **Hasan:** Reported by Ibn Maajah (3843) from Jaabir ﷺ; Al-Albaanee declared it sound (*hasan*) in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (3635).

[7] He was Abu 'Abdillaah Muhammad bin Maajah Al-Qazweenee. He was born in 207H and traveled in search of Hadeeth. He was one of the well-known distinguished scholars of Hadeeth, author of the *Sunan*. He passed away in 273H or 275H.

[8] **Hasan:** Reported by Ibn Maajah (3843) from Jaabir ﷺ; Al-Albaanee declared it sound (*hasan*) in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (3635).

[9] **Da'eef:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (3599) and declared weak by Al-Albaanee in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'* (1183).

"O Allaah, benefit me with what You have taught me, and teach me that which will benefit me, and provide me with knowledge that will benefit me." [10]

Abu Nu'aim[11] reported from Anas ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ would say:

اللهم إنّا نسألك إيماناً دائماً فرب إيمان
غير دائم وأسألك علماً نافعا فرب علم غير نافع

"O Allaah, I indeed ask you for lasting Faith, for it is possible that there could be Faith yet it is not lasting. And I ask you for beneficial knowledge, for it is possible that there could be knowledge yet it is not beneficial." [12]

Abu Dawood[13] reported from Buraidah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إنَّ منَ البيان سحراً وإن من العلم جهلاً

"Verily, there are some forms of eloquent speech that are magic, and there are some forms of knowledge that are ignorance." [14]

Sa'sa'ah bin Sawhaan explained the Prophet's ﷺ statement: **"And there are some forms of knowledge that are ignorance"** to mean that a scholar assigns to his knowledge what he doesn't know and so that causes him to become ignorant.

It has also been interpreted to mean that knowledge which harms and does not benefit is in fact just ignorance, since being unaware or ignorant about it is better than being aware of it. So if being unaware of it is better for him,

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[10] Reported by An-Nasaa'ee in *as-Sunan-ul-Kubraa*

[11] He was the Imaam, the Haafidh, Abu Nu'aim Ahmad bin 'Abdillaah Al-Asbahaanee. He was born in 336H and well known for his strong ability to memorize and report narrations. He authored several books including *Hilyat-ul-Awliyaa*, *Dalaa'il-un-Nubuwwah* and other works. He passed away in 430H.

[12] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *Hilyat-ul-Awliyaa* (6/179)

[13] He was Sulaymaan bin Al-Ash'ath As-Sijistaanee. He was born in 202H and authored the book *as-Sunan* which consists of 4300 *ahaadeeth* and which he presented to Imaam Ahmad, who approved of it. He died in 275H in Basrah, Iraq.

[14] **Da'eef:** Reported by Abu Dawood (5012) and declared weak by Al-Albaanee in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'-us-Sagheer* (1991)

then it is worse than ignorance. An example of this is magic and other types of knowledge that are harmful to one's religious and worldly affairs.

The Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have explained some of the types of knowledge that do not benefit. In the *Maraaseel* of Abu Dawood (pg. 233), Zayd bin Aslam ﷺ reported that it was once said to the Prophet ﷺ: "O Messenger of Allaah, who is the most knowledgeable of people?" He ﷺ said: **"Of what?"** They said: "Of the people's lineages." He ﷺ replied:

علم لا ينفع وجهالة لا تضر

"It is a knowledge that doesn't benefit and an ignorance that doesn't harm." [15]

Abu Nu'aim also reported this hadeeth in *Riyaad-ul-Muta'allimeen* from Baqiyyah from Ibn Juaraij from 'Ataa[16] from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in *marfoo'* form. However, in his narration, the Companions said: "Who are the most knowledgeable people of the lineages of the Arabs and the most knowledgeable people of poetry and of the issues the Arabs differ on." In the last part of this narration, the following addition occurs from the Prophet ﷺ (that he said):

العلم ثلاثة ما خلاهن فهو فضل: آية محكمة، أو سنة قائمة، أو فريضة عادلة

"Knowledge is of three types – anything besides that is excess: (1) A clear verse, (2) an established Sunnah, and (3) an upright obligation." [17]

This chain of narration is not authentic. Baqiyyah reported it by way of *tadlees* from unreliable sources. Abu Dawood and Ibn Maajah reported the

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[15] **Da'eef:** Mentioned by Ad-Daylamee in *Musnad-ul-Firdaws* (6968) from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in *marfoo'* form and mentioned by As-Suyootee in *al-Jaami'-us-Sagheer* (8164). Al-Albaanee declared it weak in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'* (3725). Its wording is: **"Knowledge of lineage is a knowledge that doesn't benefit and an ignorance that doesn't harm."**

[16] He was 'Ataa bin Abee Rabaah, Abu Muhammad bin Aslam Al-Qurshee. He was the Muftee and the Muhaddith of the people of Makkah, born during the Khilaafah of 'Uthmaan and some say 'Umar. Abu Haneefah said: "I did not see anyone more virtuous than 'Ataa." He died in Ramadaan 114H in Makkah.

[17] **Da'eef:** Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *Jaami' Bayaan-il-'Ilmi wa Fadlihi* (2/23). Its chain of narration is weak as mentioned by the author.

last part of the hadeeth from 'Amr bin Al-'Aas ﷺ in *marfoo'* form that the Prophet ﷺ said:

العلم ثلاثة ما سوى ذلك فهو فضل: آية محكمة، أو سنة قائمة، أو فريضة عادلة

"Knowledge is of three types – anything beyond that is excess: (1) A clear verse, (2) an established Sunnah, and (3) an upright obligation." [18]

In its chain of narration is 'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Ziyaad Al-Afreeqee[19] and it is well known that he has weakness.

Concerning Genealogy and Astronomy:

The command to learn about lineage that which will enable one to keep family ties has come to us by way of Abu Hurairah ﷺ who reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

تعلموا من أنسابكم ما تصلون به أرحامكم

"Learn from your lineages that by which you will be able to keep your family ties." [20]

Imaam Ahmad[21] and At-Tirmidhee reported it.

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[18] **Da'eef:** Reported by Abu Dawood (2885) and Ibn Maajah (54) from 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr ﷺ and declared weak by Al-Albaanee in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami-us-Sagheer* (3871).

[19] He was Ibn An'am Abu Khaalid Al-Mu'aafaree from the people of Egypt. Ibn Hibbaan said about him: "He would transmit fabricated reports on the authority of reliable narrators, and he would attribute to the reliable that which was not from their narrations. He was the first person to be born into Islaam in Africa after it was conquered and he passed away in 156H.

[20] **Saheeh:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (1979) and authenticated by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (2965).

[21] He was Abu 'Abdillaah Ahmad bin Hanbal Ash-Shaybaanee, the Imaam of Ahlus-Sunnah in his time. He was born in 164H and sought knowledge at a very young age, which included traveling to far-away lands. The Muslims have unanimously agreed on his scholarliness, piety and abstinence, Ash-Shaafi'ee said about him: "I left Baghdad and did not leave behind anyone more God-fearing, abstemious, pious and more knowledgeable than him." He is responsible for compiling the *Musnad* and his *madh-hab* in Fiqh is one of the well-known juristic schools. He passed away in 241H according to the most correct view.

Humaid bin Zanjawaih[22] reported it from another path of narrators leading to Abu Hurairah ﷺ and raised it to a saying of the Prophet ﷺ with the wording:

تعلموا من أنسابكم ما تصلون به أرحامكم ثم انتهوا. وتعلموا من العربية ما تعرفون به كتاب الله ثم انتهوا. وتعلموا من النجوم ما تهتدون به في ظلمات البر والبحر ثم انتهوا

"Learn from your lineages that by which you will be able to keep your family ties then stop. And learn from the Arabic language that by which you will be able to understand the Book of Allaah then stop. And learn from astronomy that by which you will be able to guide yourself through the darkness of the land and sea then stop." [23]

In its chain of narrators is Ibn Lahee'ah.[24]

The Benefit of Knowing Astronomy:

It has also been narrated in the report of Nu'aim bin Abee Hind[25] that 'Umar said: "Learn from astronomy that by which you will be able to guide yourselves through your lands and seas, then withhold. And learn from genealogy that which will enable you to maintain your family ties and to find out which women are permissible for you (to marry) and which ones you are forbidden from (marrying), then withhold." [26]

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[22] He was Abu Ahmad Humaid bin Mukhlid bin Qutaibah bin 'Abdillaah Al-Azdee, Ibn Zanjawaih, the Haafidh. Zanjawaih was the nickname of his father. He authored numerous books. Ahmad bin Sayaar said: "He had a good understanding. He wrote and traveled and was a leading figure in knowledge." Ibn Hibbaan said in *ath-Thiqaat*: "He was from the elite inhabitants of his country in terms of understanding and knowledge. And he was the one who manifested the Sunnah in Nasaa." He died in 247H.

[23] **Da'eef:** Reported by Al-Bayhaqee in *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (1723); As-Suyootee mentioned the last sentence from it, which is: "**Learn from astronomy that by which you will be able to guide yourself through the darkness of the land and the sea then stop.**" He attributed it to Ibn Mardawaih and Al-Khateeb in his book *an-Nujoom* from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ; Al-Albaanee declared it weak in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'* (2456).

[24] He was 'Abdullaah bin Lahee'ah bin 'Uqbah Al-Hadramee, Abu 'Abdir-Rahmaan, the judge from Egypt. He was a noble Faqeeh and would narrate hadeeth from his books. However, they were burned, so he would mix his narrations after that. He died in 174H.

[25] He was An-Nu'maan bin Ushaim Al-Ashja'ee. An-Nasaa'ee and Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr declared him reliable and Muslim and Al-Bukhaaree reported for him. He died in 110H.

[26] See the previous sources and refer to *at-Talkhees-ul-Habeer* of Ibn Hajr (2/187).

Mis'ar reported from Muhammad bin 'Abdillaah that 'Umar bin Al-Khattaab ﷺ said:

تعلموا من النجوم ما تعرفون به القبلة والطريق

"Learn from astronomy that which will enable you to know (the direction of) the Qiblah and your way." [27]

(Ibraaheem) An-Nakha'ee would see nothing wrong with a man learning from astronomy that by which he could guide himself (through land or sea).[28] And Imaam Ahmad and Ishaaq[29] allowed the learning of the stations of the moon and the learning of the names of the stars which would enable one to find his way (when traveling)

However, Qataadah[30] considered it detestable to learn the stations of the moon and Ibn 'Uyainah[31] did not permit it to be learned. Harb[32] reported these views on both of them.

Taawoos[33] said:

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[27] The author of *'Awn-ul-Ma'bood* (10/285) mentioned it.

[28] Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (2/39) and its chain is *jayyid* (good). [A]

[29] He was Ibn Ibraaheem Abu Ya'qoob At-Tameemee Al-Handhalee, better known as Ishaaq bin Raahawaih. Imaam Ahmad said about him: "I do not know of anyone in Iraq equal to Ishaaq." Al-Bukhaaree said he died in 238H.

[30] He was Ibn Di'aamah As-Sudoosee, Abul-Khattaab Ad-Dareer. He was born blind, but went on to become a great scholar of Tafseer from the students of Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ. He was an authoritative source in memorizing and a leader in the science of genealogy, from the major Taabi'een. He passed away in 117H.

[31] He was the great scholar, the Haafidh, Shaikh-ul-Islaam, Abu Muhammad Sha'baan bin 'Uyainah bin Maymoon Al-Hilaalee Al-Koofee, the Muhaddith of the Sacred Precinct. He was born in 107H and sought knowledge from his early youth. He was an Imaam, an authoritative source, a Haafidh, possessing immense knowledge and profound ability. He died in 198H.

[32] He was Harb bin Isma'eel Al-Kirmaanee, Abu Muhammad, the Faqeeh, the Haafidh and companion of Imaam Ahmad. Abu Haatim Ar-Raazee accepted narrations from him. He died in 280H.

[33] He was Taawoos bin Kaysaan, Abu 'Abdir-Rahmaan Al-Yamaanee. He was a leader in knowledge and actions, a great scholar and the Muftee of the people of Yemen. He died in Makkah in 106H during one of his pilgrimages and Hishaam bin 'Abdil-Malik, the Khaleefah, prayed over him.

رب ناظر في النجوم ومتعلم حروف أبي جاد ليس له عند الله خلاق

"It could be that one who looks at the stars and one who learns the letters of Abee Jaad has no share (of religion) in the sight of Allaah."

Harb reported this as did Humaid bin Zanjawaih from Taawoos on the authority of Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ.[34]

It is probable that what was meant by his statement was acquiring knowledge of it for producing effects and not for finding one's direction, since learning it to produce effects (in one's life) is futile and forbidden. Also, the following hadeeth which has been raised to a saying of the Prophet was reported concerning it:

من اقتبس شعبة من النجوم فقد اقتبس شعبة من السحر

"Whoever grasps a branch from astronomy has grasped a branch from magic." [35]

Abu Dawood reported this from the narration of Ibn 'Abbaas in *marfoo'* form. He also reported from Qabeesah in *marfoo'* form that the Prophet ﷺ said:

العيافة والطِيَرة والطرق من الجبت

"'Iyaafah, Tiyarah and Tarq are from Jibt." [36]

'Iyaafah means restraining birds while *Tarq* means drawing lines on the ground (for omens).

So learning astronomy to determine results and consequences is false and prohibited, while acting on what that mandates such as drawing (oneself) near to the stars and bringing people close to it is disbelief.

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[34] **Saheeh:** The narration of Ibn 'Abbaas was reported by 'Abdur-Razzaaq in *al-Musannaf* (11/26), Al-Bayhaqee in *as-Sunan* (8/139) and in *ash-Shu'ab* (2/203) and Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (2/39) and its chain of narration is authentic. [A]

[35] **Saheeh:** Reported by Abu Dawood (3905) and Ibn Maajah (3726) from Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ; Al-Albaanee authenticated it in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (6074).

[36] **Da'eef:** Reported by Abu Dawood (3907) and declared weak by Al-Albaanee in *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'* (3900)

But as for learning it for directional purposes, then if one learns from it what he needs to be able to guide himself and find his way and direction, it is permissible according to the majority of the scholars. However, anything beyond this is not necessary and it will only preoccupy a person from learning what is more important than it. Furthermore, it could be that trying to achieve too much accuracy and precision in that will lead one to have bad thoughts about the *mahaareeb*[37] of the Muslims in their respective regions, as occurred to many of those who studied this science both past and present.

This breeds the belief that the Companions and Taabi'een erred when they performed the prayer throughout many of the regions, and this is incorrect. Imaam Ahmad condemned using the North Star as a means to confirm one's direction, saying: "It has been reported that:

ما بين المشرق والمغرب قبلة

'What is between the east and the west is Qiblah.'" [38]

Meaning: The term "North Star", as well as other stars, was not mentioned in the Hadeeth. Ibn Mas'ood would criticize Ka'ab for saying that the planets orbit. Maalik[39] and others also denounced this. And Imaam Ahmad would criticize the astronomers for saying that the *zawaal* (setting of the sun) varies from land to land.

Their denouncement of that was based on the fact that the messengers did not speak about such things, regardless of whether the experts in those fields (of astronomy and astrology) have come to that conclusion with certainty. And it was also due to the possibility that delving too deep into these issues could lead one to have wide and extensive corrupt beliefs.

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[37] **Translator's Note:** This is the place where one marks the direction of prayer.

[38] **Saheeh:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (342) and Ibn Maajah (1011) from Abu Hurairah ﷺ and authenticated by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (5584).

[39] He was Maalik bin Anas bin Abee 'Aamir, the Haafidh and jurist. He was known as the Imaam of Dar-ul-Hijrah, i.e. Madeenah. Adh-Dhahabee mentioned that all the Imaams unanimously agreed on his religiousness, reliability, and following of the Sunnah. He is the author of the well known book on Fiqh, *al-Muwatta*. It is said that he was born in 96H and passed away in 179H.

Some individuals who had knowledge of these matters (astronomy) have come to reject the hadeeth about Allaah descending in the last third of the night,[40] saying: "The third of the night varies from region to region (due to the different time zones), so it is not possible for this descending to occur at one specific time."

The grotesqueness of such a justification is known by necessity through the Religion of Islaam. If the Messenger ﷺ and his rightly-guided Caliphs were to have heard a person make such statements (during their lifetimes), they would not debate with him, rather they would be quick to discipline him and link him to the ranks of the opponents, hypocrites and deniers.

The same goes for delving too deep in the knowledge of genealogy, since it is not something necessary. We already mentioned previously that 'Umar and others would forbid it. In spite of this, a group amongst the Companions and Taabi'een had knowledge of that and would give it importance. [41]

The Sciences of Arabic and Arithmetic:

Similar to this is delving too deep into the science of Arabic in terms of language and grammar. This is one of the things that preoccupy an individual from the more important aspects of knowledge. Therefore, probing too deep into it deprives one from beneficial knowledge.

Al-Qaasim bin Mukhaimirah[42] would consider (learning) the science of grammar disliked. And he would say:

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[40] The author is referring here to the authentic hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and Maalik from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in which the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Our Lord, Blessed and Exalted, descends every night to the lowest (level of) heaven, saying: 'Who will call Me that I may respond to him? Who will ask of Me that I may give him? Who will seek My forgiveness that I may forgive him?'"**

[41] From amongst this group of Companions was none other than Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, may Allaah be pleased with him, as the Prophet ﷺ testified to that for him. Imaam Muslim reported in his *Saheeh* (1935) from 'Aa'ishah in a long hadeeth that the Prophet ﷺ told Hassaan: **"Do not be hasty for Abu Bakr is the most knowledgeable amongst Quraish concerning their lineages."** [A]

[42] He was the Imaam Al-Qaasim bin Mukhaimirah Abu 'Urwah Al-Hamdaanee from Koofah. He settled in Damascus and would narrate hadeeth from Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudree ﷺ, 'Alqamah bin Qais, Shuraih bin Haani' and many others. Hasaan bin 'Atiyyah and others would report from him. He was one of the hard-working scholars. Al-Haitham bin 'Adiyy said he died in 111H.

أوله شغل وآخره بغي

"It starts out as a distraction and ends up a transgression."

What he meant by this was going too deep in learning it. Ahmad also considered it disliked to delve too deep into knowledge of the language and its obscurities. He would criticize Abu 'Ubaydah for his extensive studies in that saying to him: "This preoccupies (you) from what is more important than it." This is why it is said:

العربية في الكلام كالملح في الطعام

"The use of Arabic in speech is like that of salt in food" meaning one should only take from it the amount that will improve his speech just like one should only take from salt the amount that will improve his food. But as for what is beyond that, then it will only spoil it.

The same goes for arithmetic – the only thing that is necessary from it is that by which one can calculate the amounts of what is to be distributed from inheritance and bequests, as well as the funds that must be divided amongst those who deserve it (i.e. Zakaat).

Anything beyond this, which does not produce any benefit except to just exercise and enhance one's mental skills is not necessary and only preoccupies one from learning what is more important.

The Condemnable Innovated Sciences:

As for the types of knowledge that have been introduced after (the time of) the Companions, which those who delve into them call "sciences" and believe that whoever does not have knowledge of them is ignorant or misguided, then all of them are an innovation And they fall under the newly-invented matters that have been prohibited.

An example of this is what the Mu'atazilah[43] have invented such as talking about Allaah's Divine Decree (*Qadar*) and putting forth examples for Allaah

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[43] **Al-Mu'atazilah:** They are the followers of Waasil bin Ataa', who withdrew (*'Itizaal*) from the gathering of Al-Hasan Al-Basree. He held that a Muslim who sins is in a level between two levels, thus he is neither a believer nor a disbeliever. However, he will reside eternally in the Hellfire. 'Amr bin 'Ubayd followed him in that and their views concerning the Attributes of Allaah are based on *ta'teel*, like the Jahmiyyah, and

(i.e. His Names and Attributes). The prohibition of delving too deep into the issue of Allaah's Divine Decree has been mentioned in the narrations. In the *Saheeh* Collections of Ibn Hibbaan[44] and Al-Haakim, Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ said in *marfoo'* form:

لا يزال أمر هذه الأمة موافيا ومقاربا ما لم يتكلموا في الولدان والقدر

"The affair of this ummah will not cease to be sufficient and precise so long as they do not speak about the (divinely-produced) outcomes and Pre-Decree." [45]

It has also been raised to a saying of the Prophet, while other reporters have affirmed that it was "stopped" at being a saying of Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ.

Al-Bayhaqee[46] transmitted from the narration of Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ in *marfoo'* form that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إذا ذكر أصحابي فأمسكوا وإذا ذكر النجوم فأمسكوا

"When my Companions are mentioned, then refrain, and when the stars (i.e. astronomy) are mentioned, then refrain." [47]

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concerning *Qadar* (Pre-Decree), like that of the Qadariyyah. They reject the relation of the *Qadaa* and the *Qadar* of Allaah on the actions of a human being. [Refer to the "Explanation of Sufficiency in Creed" by Imaam Ibn 'Uthaimeen (pg. 185)]

[44] He was the Haafidh, the great scholar, Abu Haatim Muhammad bin Hibbaan bin Ahmad bin Hibbaan, author of several books. He compiled the well known *Musnad as-Saheeh*, *at-Taareekh*, and *ad-Du'afaa*. Al-Haakim said: "Ibn Hibbaan was one of the vessels of knowledge, understanding, language and admonition – from the most intellectual of people." He died in 354H.

[45] **Saheeh:** Reported by Ibn Hibbaan in his *Saheeh* (6724) and Al-Haakim in his *Mustadrak* (1/88); Al-Albaanee declared it authentic in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (2003).

[46] He was the Haafidh and great scholar, the Shaikh of Khurasaan, Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Al-Husain Al-Bayhaqee, He compiled and wrote books the likes of which were not found before his time. He was also an abstemious, pious and God-fearing Imaam. He traveled to the Hijaaz and to Iraq. Adh-Dhahabee said about him: "His writings number close to one thousand volumes. Bayhaq is an ascription to a town near Naisapur.

[47] **Saheeh:** Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *Hilyat-ul-Awliyaa* (4/108) and Ibn 'Adiyy in *al-Kaamil* (7/24); Al-Haithamee mentioned it in *al-Majma'* (7/202) and attributed it to At-Tabaraanee; Al-Albaanee declared it authentic in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (545).

This narration has been reported through numerous paths, however there is speculation on their chains of narration. It is reported on Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ that he once said to Maymoon bin Mihraan: [48]

إياك والنظر في النجوم فإنها تدعو إلى الكهانة والقدر فإنه يدعو إلى الزندقة وإياك وشتم أحد من أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم فيُكِبَّكَ الله في النار على وجهك

"Beware of probing into the stars (i.e. astronomy) for that leads to soothsaying (i.e. fortune-telling); and the Divine Decree (*Qadar*) for that leads to heresy. And beware of reviling anyone of the Companions of Muhammad lest Allaah should throw you into the Hellfire on your face."

Abu Nu'aim transmitted this narration raising it to a saying of the Prophet. However it is not authentic in that form. [49]

The prohibition of delving too deep into matters of the Divine Pre-Decree applies to several different scenarios:

1. An example of it is placing parts of the Book of Allaah against each other, such as when one who affirms *Al-Qadar* brings out an *ayah* (to defend his view) while another who denies it brings out another *ayah*, and the end result of this is arguing and debating. [50]

This falls under the realm of arguing and disputing concerning the Qur'aan, and we have been prohibited from doing that.

[48] He was the exemplary Imaam Abu Ayoob Maymoon bin Mihraan, the scholar of the Arab Peninsula. A woman freed him from slavery in Koofah where he grew up. He later settled in Arabia and died in 217H when he was more than eighty years old.

[49] **Da'eef:** As-Sahmee reported a narration similar to this in *Taareekh Jarjaan* (pg. 429) with a chain leading to Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ and raised to a saying of the Prophet ﷺ. However, it is weak due to the weakness of Ahmad bin Muhammad, one of the chain's narrators, as stated by Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr in *al-Lisaan* (1/298). [A]

[50] The author is referring to the hadeeth reported by Muslim in his *Saheeh* (2053) from 'Abdullaah bin Rabaah Al-Ansaaree ﷺ that 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr ﷺ said: "I migrated to the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. One day he heard the voices of two men arguing about an *ayah*, so Allaah's Messenger ﷺ came out to us, while the anger could be recognized on his face, and said: **'Verily, those who came before were ruined due to their differing concerning the revealed Scripture.'"** [A]

2. Another example of delving too deep in matters of the Divine Pre-Decree is: Negating it and affirming it based on logical reasoning, as done by the Qadariyyah[51] who claim: "If Allaah pre-decrees all matters and makes those things come to pass, then goes on to punish (His servants) based on those results, He would be oppressing them."

And this is the same with their opponents who claim: "Allaah has coerced His servants into doing the actions (that they do)."

3. Another example of it is delving too deep into the hidden aspects of what has been pre-decreed. It has been reported that 'Alee ﷺ and others amongst the Salaf forbade this. This is since humans do not have the ability to uncover that.

The Innovators introduce Speaking about Allaah's Attributes:

What also falls under that - i.e. newly-invented matters - is what the Mu'atazilah and those who follow their footsteps have introduced, such as speaking about the Essence (*Dhaat*) of Allaah and His Attributes based on evidences concocted by their intellects. This is more dangerous than speaking on Allaah's Divine Pre-Decree, since when one speaks about Allaah's Pre-Decree, He is speaking about Allaah's Attributes, whereas this (latter category) is speaking about Allaah's Essence and Attributes.

These individuals are divided into two groups:

First: Those who negate many of the Attributes mentioned in the Qur'aan and Sunnah due to their deeming it necessary to do so when drawing comparisons between them and the attributes of the creation. An example of this is the view of the Mu'atazilah: "If He (Allaah) were to be seen, He would be a body."

[51] **Al-Qadariyyah:** Their methodology consists of denying the fact that *Qadar* plays any role in the actions of a servant and the belief that he has an independent desire and ability apart from the Desire and Ability of Allaah. The first to manifest such a view openly was Mu'bad Al-Juhnee, in the last part of the era of the Prophet's Companions. He learned it from a Majoosee man from Basrah. They are divided into two groups, one that is extreme and one that is not. The extremist group rejects the Attributes of Knowledge, Desire, Ability and Creating from Allaah having any part in the actions of the servant. This group has now become extinct or close to it. Those who are not extreme believe that Allaah is knowledgeable of the actions of the servant, however, they reject it occurring by His Desire, Ability and Creating. [Refer to the "Explanation of Sufficiency in Creed" by Imaam Ibn 'Uthaimeen (pg. 184-185)]

Those who negate Allaah's Rising agree with them and negate it based on this same misconception. This is the way of the Mu'atazilah and the Jahmiyyah[52] of whom the Salaf have unanimously agreed are innovators and astray.

Many of those who ascribe themselves to the Sunnah and Hadeeth from the latter-day Muslims followed their way in certain issues.

Second: Those who sought to affirm Allaah's Attributes by using evidences concocted by the intellect – which have not been mentioned in the narrations – in their efforts to refute the statements of the first category. This was the way of Muqaatil bin Sulaymaan[53] and those who followed him like Nooh bin Abee Maryam.[54] A group amongst the scholars of Hadeeth (Muhadditheen) past and present also followed them in that. This is also the way of the Karaamiyyah[55] for amongst them are those who in their attempt to affirm these Attributes (for Allaah) also affirmed a body (for Him) whether literally or figuratively.

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[52] **Al-Jahmiyyah:** They attribute themselves to Al-Jahm bin Safwaan who was killed by Saalim or Salim bin Ahwaz in the year 121H. Their views on the Attributes of Allaah consist of *ta'teel* (denial) and *nafee* (negation). Regarding *al-Qadar* (Divine Pre-Decree), they hold the opinion that mankind is coerced into doing deeds (*al-jabr*). Their view on Eemaan is that of *Irjaa*, which means that they believe Eemaan is merely the confirmation of the heart, and that statements and actions are not part of Eemaan. So according to them, someone who commits a major sin is a believer with complete Eemaan, i.e. Eemaan does not increase or decrease. So they are Mu'atazilah, Jabariyyah and Murji'ah all in one and they are divided into many sects. [Refer to the "Explanation of Sufficiency in Creed" by Imaam Muhammad bin Saalih Al-'Uthaimeen (pg. 184)]

[53] He was Abul-Hasan Muqaatil bin Sulaymaan bin Basheer Al-Azdee Al-Balkhee from Khurasaan, well known for his Tafseer.

[54] He was Abu 'Ismah Nooh bin Abee Maryam Al-Qurshee. He was the judge of Marwa and was also known as Nooh Al-Jaami'.

[55] **Al-Karaamiyyah:** They are the followers of Muhammad bin Karaam, who came from one of the districts in Sijistaan and died in 225H. He held that Eemaan (Faith) was just a statement of the tongue and that belief of the heart and actions of the limbs did not fall into it. So according to him, whoever affirms Faith with his tongue is a true believer even if his heart believes in polytheism. His group denied worship and claimed that the hypocrites were really believers. They incline towards *tashbeeh* and hold the belief of *Irjaa*. They are further divided into numerous groups. [Refer to the "Explanation of Sufficiency in Creed" by Imaam Ibn 'Uthaimeen (pg. 185)]

Also amongst them are those who affirm attributes for Allaah that are neither mentioned in the Qur'aan nor the Sunnah, such as movement and other attributes that they believe Allaah's affirmed Attributes call for.

The Salaf denounced the statements made by Muqaatil in his attempt to refute Jahm,[56] using proofs derived from the intellect. And they went to great lengths in criticizing him to the point that some amongst them deemed it permissible to execute him, as is the case with Makkee bin Ibraaheem,[57] the teacher of Al-Bukhaaree[58] and others.

The correct view is that which the Pious Predecessors (*Salaf as-Saalih*) were upon, which is leaving the verses and *ahaadeeth* containing Allaah's Attributes as they were reported without trying to explain them (*tafseer*), describe their meaning (*takyeef*) or make comparisons to them (*tamtheel*). There is no authentic report whatsoever on any of them (i.e. the Salaf) – especially Imaam Ahmad – showing that they disagreed with this or that they delved too deep into trying to figure out their meanings or that they made examples or comparisons for them.

Even though there can be found some people close to the time of Ahmad that fell into committing some of this, due to their following the way of Muqaatil, they should not be followed in that. One should only follow the example of the Imaams of Islaam like Ibn Al-Mubaarak,[59] Maalik, Ath-

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[56] He was Abu Muhriz, Jahm bin Safwaan As-Samarqandee, the misguided innovator and founder of the Jahmiyyah. He was alive during the time of the younger Taabi'een but was not known to have reported anything from them. Instead, he fabricated his own ideologies and spread much corruption.

[57] He was the Haafidh, the Imaam, the scholar of Khurasaan, Abus-Sukan Makkee bin Ibraaheem At-Tameemee Al-Handhalee Al-Balkhee, from the pious worshippers. He was born in 126H and set out to seek Hadeeth when he was 17. He died in 215H.

[58] He was the exemplary Imaam of Hadeeth, Abu 'Abdillaah Muhammad bin Isma'eel Al-Bukhaaree. He was born in 194H and sought Hadeeth from a very young age. He was reported to have corrected an error made by one of his teachers when he was only 11. He heard many ahaadeeth and wrote several books, the greatest of which was *al-Jaami'-us-Saheeh* about which he said: "I did not place in it anything except the authentic even though I had memorized one-hundred thousand *ahaadeeth*." He died in 256H in Samarqand.

[59] He was 'Abdullaah bin Al-Mubaarak, the Imaam and Haafidh, the great scholar and author of beneficial works. He was born in 118H and died in 181H. He compiled books on the subjects of jurisprudence, abstemiousness, and heart-softening narrations.

Thawree,[60] Al-Awzaa'ee,[61] Ash-Shaafi'ee,[62] Ahmad, Ishaaq, Abu 'Ubayd[63] and those similar to them.

There cannot be found in the statements of these Imaams any type of speech similar to that of the people of rhetoric, not to mention that of the philosophers, nor did such statements enter into the speech of those who were void of criticism and disparagement.

Abu Zur'ah Ar-Raazee[64] said:

كل من كان عنده علم فلم يصن علمه
واحتاج في نشره إلى شيء من الكلام فلستم منه

"Anyone that has knowledge, but does not preserve his knowledge, and requires some form of rhetoric (*kalaam*) in order to spread it, you have nothing to do with him."

Criticizing the Intellectually-Derived Views:

Another example of that – i.e. newly-invented matters – is what the opinionative claimants of Jurisprudence (*Fuqahaa Ahlur-Rayy*) have

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[60] He was the Imaam Abu 'Abdillaah Sufyaan Ath-Thawree from Koofah, the great jurist and Shaikh of Islaam. He was born in 97H and passed away in 161H in Basrah.

[61] He was the Imaam and Haafidh Abu 'Amr Al-Awzaa'ee, born in 88H. Al-Khareebee said about him: "Al-Awzaa'ee was the best amongst the people of his time." Al-Mansoor, the Khaleefah, would praise Al-Awzaa'ee and listen to his admonitions and honor him. He died in 157H.

[62] He was the Imaam and great scholar, Abu 'Abdillaah Muhammad bin Idrees Ash-Shaafi'ee. He was born in 150H in Gaza. Abu Thawr said about him: "I did not see anyone like Ash-Shaafi'ee, nor did he see anyone like himself." His virtues were many and can be referenced in the books on history. He was a Haafidh of Hadeeth, having great insight into their defects. He died in 204H.

[63] He was Abu 'Ubayd Al-Qaasim bin Salaam, the Imaam and Mujtahid, the linguist, the jurist, author of several books. Adh-Dhahabee said about him: "Whoever looks into the books of Abu 'Ubayd will realize his status in memorization and knowledge. He was a Haafidh of Hadeeth, knowledgeable of its defects and well-versed in jurisprudence and the issues of difference. He was an authority in Fiqh and in recitation of the Qur'aan. He died in Makkah in 224H.

[64] He was the Imaam and Haafidh of his time, Abu Zur'ah 'Ubaydullaah Ar-Raazee Al-Qurshee. He was from among the unique personalities of his time in terms of memorization, intelligence, religion, sincerity, knowledge and righteous deeds. He died in 264H.

introduced from intellectual guidelines and principles and their referring the subsidiary aspects of Jurisprudence (Fiqh) to them regardless of whether they oppose or conform to the Sunnah, totally disregarding those well-established principles. Even though the sources for these principles are based on what they interpreted from the texts of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, they are still interpretations that others oppose them in.

This is what the Imaams of Islaam have criticized those opinionative claimants of Jurisprudence (*Fuqahaa Ahlur-Rayy*) in Hijaaz and Iraq for, and they went to great lengths in criticizing and denouncing them.

As for the Imaams and scholars of Fiqh amongst Ahlul-Hadeeth, they follow the authentic hadeeth wherever it is so long as it was practiced by the Companions and those after them or by a group amongst them.

As for what the Salaf have agreed upon abandoning, it is not permissible to act on it, since they only abandoned that out of their knowledge and understanding that it should not be implemented.

'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez said: [65]

خذوا من الرأي ما يوافق من كان قبلكم فإنهم كانوا أعلم منكم

"Take from the opinions (only) that which conforms to (the views of) those who preceded you, for indeed they were more knowledgeable than you."

As for the hadeeth that contradicted the actions of the people of Madeenah, then (Imaam) Maalik's opinion was that of following (and giving precedence to) the actions of the people of Madeenah. Regardless, the majority of the scholars accept and act upon the Hadeeth.

The Prohibition of Disputing and Arguing:

Also amongst the things that the Salaf would denounce was disputing, arguing and quarreling in matters concerning the lawful and the unlawful. This was not the way of the Imaams of Islaam. Rather this was only introduced after them such as when the Iraqi jurists introduced it into the issues of difference of opinion between the Shaafi'ees and the Hanafees.

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[65] He was 'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez, Commander of the Believers. He was born in Madeenah and raised in Egypt. He was an Imaam, a scholar, well known for his wise sayings and pious lifestyle. He died in 101H.

They authored books on these differences and exerted extensive research and arguments on them.

All of this is innovated and has no basis, yet it became their "knowledge" and "science" to the point that it preoccupied them from (acquiring the true) beneficial knowledge, whereas the Salaf denounced this. It has been reported in a *marfoo'* narration in the *Sunan* Collections that the Prophet ﷺ said:

ما ضل قوم بعد هدى إلا أوتوا الجدل

"A people were never lead astray after guidance came to them except that they were given into argumentation." Then he ﷺ recited

مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ

"They did not present it except for (the sake of) arguing. Nay, but they are a quarrelsome people." [Surah Az-Zukhruf: 58] [66]

One of the Salaf said:

إذا أرَادَ الله بعَبْدٍ خَيراً فتَحَ له بابَ العَمَل، وأغْلقَ عنْهُ بابَ الجَدَل
وإذا أرَادَ الله بعَبْدٍ شَرّاً أغْلقَ عَنْهُ بابَ العَمَل، و فتَحَ له بَابَ الجَدَل

"When Allaah intends good for a servant, He opens for him the door of actions and closes for him the door of argumentation. And when Allaah intends evil for a servant, He closes for him the door of actions and opens for him the door of argumentation." [67]

Imaam Maalik said:

أدركت أهل هذه البلدة وإنهم ليكرهون هذا الإكثار الذي فيه الناس اليوم

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[66] **Hasan:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (3253) and Ibn Maajah (48) from Abu Umaamah ؓ; Al-Albaanee declared it sound (*hasan*) in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (5633).

[67] This is the statement of Ma'roof Al-Kurkhee which was reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (8/361) and Al-Khateeb in *Iqtidaa-ul-'Ilm al-'Amal* (123). [A]

"I reached (i.e. met) the people of this city (Madeenah) and they used to hate this excessiveness that the people are upon today" – meaning issues. [68]

He would condemn too much talking and issuing of verdicts, and he would say: "One of them speaks as if he were a camel in heat, saying it is like this and that, braying while he talks."

He would also hate responding to too many questions, saying: "Allaah says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي

'And they **ask you concerning the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is from the affair of my Lord.'** [Surah Al-Israa: 85] So He did not provide an answer for that."

And it was once said to him: "Can a man be knowledgeable of the Sunnah and argue in its defense?" He replied:

لا ولكن يخبر بالسنة فان قبل منه وإلا سكت

"No, rather, he should inform about the Sunnah. If it is accepted from him, then that is good, but if not, he should remain silent (i.e. and not argue)."

And he (i.e. Maalik) said:

المراء والجدال في العلم يذهب بنور العلم

"Quarreling and disputing with regard to knowledge causes the light of knowledge to go away."

He also said:

المراء في العلم يُقسي القلب ويورث الضغن

"Quarreling with regards to knowledge hardens the heart and breeds resentment."

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[68] Reported by Al-Khateeb in *al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih* (2/9). [A]

Also many times when he would be asked questions, he would reply saying: "I don't know." And Imaam Ahmad would follow his example in that.

There are numerous narrations that indicate the prohibition of asking too many questions or problematical questions or questions about things before they actually happen. If we were to mention them all here, this discussion would be severely prolonged.

And along with this, the statements the Salaf made contain information on the source of Fiqh and the logic of the rulings using short and brief words by which the intended objective can be understood without having to go into prolonging or elaborating.

Their statements also contain a refutation of those views that oppose the Sunnah using the slightest of indications and the best of expressions to the point that it suffices those who understand it over the prolonged elaborations of the people of rhetoric that came after them. As a matter of fact, perhaps the prolonged explanation of those who came after them did not contain the amount of correctness in those matters like that found in the statements of the Salaf and the Imaams, in spite of their brevity and conciseness.

Therefore, when those amongst the Salaf of this ummah remained silent in the face of too much argumentation and disputation, they did not do so out of ignorance on their part or an inability to respond. Rather, they remained silent due to (their) knowledge and fear of Allaah.

Whereas, when those who came after them spoke out (on these issues) and went deep into elaborating them, they did not do so due to their specialization in knowledge apart from them, but rather out of love for speaking and due to little piety. This is similar to what was stated by Al-Hasan[69] when he heard a group of people arguing. He said:

هؤلاء قوم ملوا العبادة وخف عليهم القول وقل ورعهم فتكلموا

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[69] He was Al-Hasan Al-Basree, one of the great scholars and excellent examples of piety and abstinence. He was an Imaam in his time and from the leading Taabi'een.

"These are people who have become bored of worship, who find speech insignificant and who have little piety. That is why they speak out." [70]

Mahdee bin Maymoon[71] said: "I heard Muhammad bin Sireen[72] – and no man ever met him except that he would become aware of who he was and say: I know what he wants – I heard him say: 'If I had wanted to debate you, I (would have, since I) am knowledgeable of the aspects of debating."

And in another narration, he said: "I am more knowledgeable about disputing than you, yet I will not dispute with you." [73]

Ibraaheem An-Nakha'ee[74] said: "I never disputed, ever." And 'Abdul-Kareem Al-Jazary said: "No pious person ever disputes." [75]

Ja'far bin Muhammad said:

إياكم والخصومات في الدين فإنها تشغل القلب وتورث النفاق

"Beware of disputing about the Religion for indeed it preoccupies the heart and breeds hypocrisy." [76]

'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez would say:

إذا سمعت المراء فاقصر

"If you hear quarrelling, then hold back."

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[70] Reported by Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (pg. 272) and Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (2/156). [A]
[71] He was the Haafidh Abu Yahyaa Mahdee bin Maymoon Al-Azdee. He died in 172H.
[72] He was the noble scholar, Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Sireen, the freed slave of Anas bin Maalik ﷺ. He was the well-known Imaam from the heads of the Taabi'een. He was born two years before the end of 'Uthmaan's Khilaafah and died in 110H.
[73] Al-Aajurree reported a narration similar to this in *ash-Sharee'ah* (pg. 61-62) and its chain is authentic. [A]
[74] He was Abu 'Imraan Ibraaheem bin Qais bin Al-Aswad Al-Koofee. He was one of the leading scholars and sincere worshippers amongst the Taabi'een. Al-A'mash said about him: "Ibraaheem was a treasure-holder in Hadeeth." He died in 95H when he was middle-aged and before reaching elderliness.
[75] Al-Aajurree reported it in *ash-Sharee'ah* (pg. 58) and its chain is good (*jayyid*). [A]
[76] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (3/198). [A]

And he said:

من جعل دينه عرضاً للخصومات أكثر التنقل

"Whoever makes his Religion a pretext for debates increase his burden."[77]

And he said:

أن السابقين عن علم وقفوا وببصر ناقد كفوا وكانوا هم أقوى على البحث لو بحثوا

"Indeed, the predecessors based on (their) knowledge withheld (from speaking). And with clear evidences they would be sufficed. And they were the strongest at elaborating if they had a need to do it."

There are many other statements from the Salaf with this same meaning.

Many of those who came later were afflicted with this corrupt view, thinking that whoever spoke, argued, and disputed a lot concerning the issues of the Religion was more knowledgeable than those who didn't do that. This is pure ignorance. Look at the senior Companions and their scholars like Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alee, Mu'aadh, Ibn Mas'ood and Zayd bin Thaabit - how were they? The statements they made were less than that of Ibn 'Abbaas yet they were more knowledgeable than him. Similarly, the statements of the Taabi'een are more than the statements of the Companions, yet the Companions were more knowledgeable than the Taabi'een.

And likewise, the statements of the Taabi'een's followers (i.e. Atbaa'-ut-Taabi'een) were greater than that of the Taabi'een, yet the Taabi'een were more knowledgeable than them. So knowledge is not based on reporting many narrations or making many statements. Rather it is a light that is placed in the heart by which the servant comprehends the truth and by which he can distinguish the truth from falsehood, articulating himself through brief expressions that convey the intended objective.

The Prophet ﷺ was bestowed with comprehensive speech,[78] so he would be very brief in his choice of words.

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[77] Reported by Ad-Daarimee (1/91) and Al-Aajurree in *ash-Sharee'ah* (pg. 56-57). [A]
[78] The author is referring to a hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree (12/390) and Muslim (371 & 372) from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in which the Prophet ﷺ said: **"I was given**

This is why there are reports that indicate the prohibition of speaking too much and delving too deep in he said/she said talk.[79] The Prophet ﷺ said:

إن الله لم يبعث نبيا إلا مبلغاً وإن تشقيق الكلام من الشيطان

"Allaah did not send any prophet except as a conveyor. And indeed complex speech is from the Devil." [80]

This means that the Prophet ﷺ would only speak those words necessary to convey his Message.

The Prohibition of Excessive Speech:

As for using excessive speech and complex statements, then this is something blameworthy.

When the Prophet ﷺ would deliver a sermon, he would speak to the point[81] and when he would narrate a hadeeth he would use such few words that if someone were to count them, he would be able to. [82]

And when he ﷺ said: **"Verily, there are some forms of eloquent speech that are magic"**[83] he did so only to condemn it not to praise it as some people think. Whoever ponders on the construction of the words in the

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preference over the (rest of the) prophets by six things..." and he ﷺ mentioned "comprehensive speech." **Translator's Note:** What is meant by *Jawaami'-ul-Kalim* (comprehensive speech) is the usage of concise words to convey a large amount of meanings and benefits. [A]

[79] The author here is referring to a hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree (3/340) and Muslim (1340 & 1341) from Al-Mugheerah bin Shu'bah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Verily, **Allaah hates three things for you: He said/She said speech, the squandering of money, and asking too many questions."** [A]

[80] Da'eef: Adh-Dhahabee mentioned it in *Meezaan-ul-'Itidaal* (7/334) under the biography of Abu Bakr, saying: "He was a Taabi'ee. It is not known who he was, but he relayed this narration"...and then he mentioned it. See *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'* (3788).

[81] Muslim reported in his *Saheeh* (2/591) that Jaabir bin Samurah ﷺ said: "I would pray along with the Prophet ﷺ, and his prayer would be to the point and his *khutbah* (Friday sermon) would be moderate." [A]

[82] 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, narrated: **"The Prophet would speak a hadeeth (to such brevity and simplicity) that if someone were to count it (i.e. the words he used), he would be able to do it."** [Reported by Muslim (2298)]

[83] Saheeh: Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (5146) from the narration of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ.

sentence will come to this same conclusion. At-Tirmidhee[84] and others reported from 'Abdullaah bin 'Amr in *marfoo'* form that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إن الله ليبغض البليغ من الرجال الذي يتخلل بلسانه كما تتخلل البقرة بلسانها

"Indeed Allaah despises the eloquent speaker amongst men who mixes up (words) with his tongue just as the cow mixes up (food) with its tongue." [85]

There are many other *ahaadeeth* reported in *marfoo'* and *mawqoof* form from 'Umar, Sa'eed,[86] Ibn Mas'ood, 'Aa'ishah and other Companions with the same meaning.

So one must believe that not everyone that has excessive detailed speech with regards to knowledge is more knowledgeable than those that are not like this.

And we have indeed been tested by ignorant people who think that some of the latter day writers who went deep in elaborate speech are more knowledgeable than those who preceded them. So amongst them are those who think that a certain individual is more knowledgeable than all those who came before (him) such as the Companions and those who succeeded them, due to his excessive words and statements.

And amongst them are those who claim that they are more knowledgeable than the well-known scholars of Fiqh that are followed (today). This claim also implies what was just mentioned before, since if these well-known

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[84] He was the Imaam, the reliable one, the authority, Abu 'Eesaa Muhammad bin 'Eesaa At-Tirmidhee. He authored the books *as-Sunan*, *al-'Ilal*, *ash-Shamaa'il-ul-Muhammadiyyah* and other works. Al-Haakim reported that he heard 'Umar bin 'Abdil-Malik say: "Al-Bukhaaree died and no one remained behind in Khurasaan like Abu 'Eesaa in terms of knowledge, memorization, piety and abstinence." He passed away in Tirmidh in 267H.

[85] **Saheeh:** Reported by Abu Dawood (5005) and At-Tirmidhee (2853) and authenticated by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (1875).

[86] He was Sa'eed bin Al-Musayyib, the Imaam, Shaikh-ul-Islaam, the Jurist of Madeenah, Abu Muhammad Al-Makhzoomee, from the most notable amongst the Taabi'een. He was born with two years remaining in the Khilaafah of 'Umar ﷺ and was characterized with having immense knowledge, tremendous respect, firm religion and with always speaking the truth. Adh-Dhahabee authored a book on his biography. There is a difference of opinion on when he died, but the strongest view is that it was in 94H.

scholars of Fiqh produced more statements than those before them and those who came after these (Fiqh scholars) are more knowledgeable than them due to their vast amount of statements and speech, this means for all the more reason that these individuals are also more knowledgeable than those who produced less statements than these (Fiqh) scholars, such as Ath-Thawree, Al-Awzaa'ee, Al-Laith,[87] Ibn Al-Mubaarak and other of their contemporaries as well as their predecessors from the Taabi'een and the Companions!

The fact is that all of these people produced fewer statements than those who came after them. So this is a tremendous mockery of the pious predecessors, and it shows one's bad opinion of them and (his) describing them as being ignorant and lacking knowledge. And there is no might or power except by Allaah's Leave!

Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ spoke truthfully about the Companions when he said that from amongst the (entire) ummah they possessed the biggest hearts, the profoundest of knowledge and the least of constraints.[88] Something similar to this was also reported on Ibn 'Umar ﷺ.

This narration indicates that those who came after them had less knowledge and more constraints than them. Ibn Mas'ood also said:

إنكم في زمان كثير علماؤه قليل خطباؤه
وسيأتي بعدكم زمان قليل علماؤه كثير خطباؤه

"Verily, you are in a time when the scholars are many while the speakers are few. And there will come a time after you when the scholars will be few while the speakers will be many." [89]

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[87] He was Al-Laith bin Sa'ad, the Imaam and the Haafidh, as well as the scholar and head of the lands of Egypt. He authored many books and his virtues are numerous. He died on a Friday night in the month of Sha'baan in 75H.

[88] Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (2/97) and its chain of narration is weak due to Sunaid bin Dawood as stated in *at-Taqreeb*. As for the narration of Ibn 'Umar, it was reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (1/305) and its chain of narration is weak due to the weakness of 'Umar bin Nubhaan and the *tadlees* of Al-Hasan Al-Basree. [A]

[89] Reported by Abu Khaithama in *al-'Ilm* (109) and its chain of narration is authentic as deemed by Al-Albaanee in his verification of *al-'Ilm*. [A]

Therefore, the one who has a lot of knowledge but few words deserves to be praised whereas the one who is the opposite of this deserves to be criticized.

The Prophet ﷺ bore witness that the people of Yemen had Faith (Eemaan) and understanding (Fiqh),[90] and this is because amongst people, the Yemenis are known to have the least amount of speech and the least amount of elaborateness in the sciences. Nevertheless, the knowledge they do have is the beneficial knowledge of the heart. And they express themselves using only the required amount from that with their tongues. This is (true) understanding and beneficial knowledge.

The Best Forms of Knowledge:

The best forms of knowledge with regard to the interpretation of the Qur'aan, the meanings of *ahaadeeth*, and speech concerning the lawful and the unlawful is what has been reported on the Companions (Sahaabah), the Successors (Taabi'een) and those who came after them up to the time of the well-known exemplary Imaams whom we mentioned previously.

Affirming the authenticity of what has been reported on them with regard to that is the best form of knowledge, provided that one understands, grasps and comprehends it. And there is no good in much of the complex speech that was introduced after them unless it is made in order to explain some statements related to their speech.

As for what opposed their statements, then most of it is untrue and has no benefit in it. And their speech concerning that is sufficient and more than enough. So there cannot be found any truth in the speech of those who came after them except that it was present in their speech (prior to that) with more concise words and simpler expressions. And there cannot be found any falsehood in the speech of those who came after them except that their speech (prior to that) had already clarified its futility for those who understood and comprehended it.

So there can be found spectacular interpretations and intricate points in their statements, which were not produced or gathered by those who came

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[90] The author is referring to a hadeeth reported by Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in which the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"There have come the people of Yemen. They have the softest of hearts. Faith is found in (those in) Yemen. Understanding is found in (those in) Yemen."** [A]

after them. Whoever does not take knowledge from their statements loses out on all of that knowledge. And he will also fall into many forms of falsehood due to his following of those who came after (them).

Furthermore, whoever desires to collect their statements needs to be aware of what is authentic from them from what is weak. This can only be achieved by way of learning the sciences of *jarh* (criticism), *ta'deel* (praise) and *'ilal* (defects of narrations). Whoever is not aware of these (sciences) will be unsure of what he transmits from those narrations and mix up what is true with what is false, not being certain of what he narrates from that.

This can be seen in one who has little knowledge of those (sciences) – he is not sure of what he reports from the Prophet or the Salaf due to his being unaware of which narration is authentic from which is weak. So out of ignorance, it is possible that everything he narrates is untrue because of his lack of being aware of that (science) by which he can determine what is authentic from what is weak.

Al-Awzaa'ee said:

العلم ما جاء به أصحاب محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم فما كان غير ذلك فليس بعلم

"Knowledge is whatever the Companions of Muhammad have reported. Anything apart from that is not (considered) knowledge."[91] Imaam Ahmad also said something similar to this.

He (Al-Awzaa'ee) also said about the Taabi'een: "You are free to choose" – meaning: "You are free to choose whether you want to write their statements down or not."

Az-Zuhree[92] used to record their statements even though Saalih bin Kaysaan[93] would oppose him in that. However, afterward, he regretted not having recorded the statements of the Taabi'een. [94]

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[91] Reported by Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (2/29). [A]

[92] He was Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Muslim bin Shihaab Az-Zuhree Al-Madanee, the Imaam and illustrious scholar of Hadeeth. He was born in 50H and passed away in 124H. He had numerous good qualities.

[93] He was Saalih bin Kaysaan, the Haafidh and scholar of Madeenah who would tutor the children of 'Umar bin 'Abdil-'Azeez. He saw 'Abdullaah bin 'Umar ﷺ and

And in our time the recording of the statements of the exemplary Salaf is restricted to the time of Ash-Shaafi'ee, Ahmad, Ishaaq and Abu 'Ubayd. So let the individual beware of what was introduced after them, for indeed there were many innovations that were introduced after their time. And there appeared those who ascribed themselves to following the Sunnah and the Hadeeth, such as the Dhaahirees and their likes who are the greatest in opposing it (i.e. the Sunnah) due to their deviation from the Imaams and their isolation from them in coming up with an understanding (of the texts), or their taking a view that the Imaams before them never held.

So as for falling into the views of the people of rhetoric and philosophers, then this is pure evil. Very rare is it that one falls into any of that (i.e. their views) without getting stained by their filth. This is as (Imaam) Ahmad said:

لا يخلو من نظر في الكلام من أن يتجهم

"Whoever looks into rhetoric cannot escape from becoming a Jahmee."

He as well as other Imaams from the Salaf would warn against the people of rhetoric regardless if they defended the Sunnah.

As for those who love the innovated rhetoric and follow its propagators, whose statements criticize those that did not delve into debating and disputing, and who describe them as being ignorant, senseless and without awareness of Allaah or His Religion, then all of these claims are from the footsteps of the Devil, and we seek refuge in Allaah from him!

A Critique and Clarification of the Falsehood of Hidden Knowledge:
Another form of innovated knowledge is speech concerning the hidden sciences, such as deeper awareness (of Allaah), actions of the heart and all the notions that fall under that, which are based on one's opinion, personal taste (*dhawq*), and self-illumination (*kashf*). There is great danger in this, and the distinguished scholars such as Imaam Ahmad and others have condemned it.

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accompanied Az-Zuhree in his search for knowledge. Al-Waaqidee reported that he passed away after 140H.

[94] Reported by Al-Khateeb in *Taqyeed-ul-'Ilm* (pg. 106-107) and Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (1/76-77). [A]

Abu Sulaymaan would say:

لتَمُرُّ بي النكتةُ من نُكَتِ القوم فلا أقبلها إلا بشاهدين عدلين الكتاب والسنة

"One of the remarks of the people would come across me and I would not accept it without (first consulting) two just witnesses: the Qur'aan and the Sunnah."

Al-Junaid said:

علمنا هذا مقيد بالكتاب والسنة من لم يقرأ
القرآن ويكتب الحديث لا يقتدى به في علمنا هذا

"This knowledge of ours is restricted to the Book and the Sunnah. Whoever doesn't read the Qur'aan and record the Hadeeth should not be followed in this knowledge of ours." [95]

The opening to this door has widened and the people in it have fallen into the various types of heresy and hypocrisy. They claim that the close-friends (*awliyaa*) of Allaah are better than the prophets or that they have no need for the prophets. And they belittle the laws that the prophets brought and (instead) incline towards *hulool* and *ittihaad* or to the belief of *wahdat-ul-wujood*[96] as well as other sources of disbelief, sinfulness and disobedience, such as the claim that what the religious laws have prohibited is in fact allowed and permissible.

They have introduced into this avenue many things that are not part of the Religion at all. They claim that some of these things allow them to achieve the softening of the hearts, such as singing and dancing.

And they claim that other things are meant for training the souls, such as lusting after and looking at forbidden images.

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[95] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (10/255) and through the same path, Al-Khateeb (7/243), and its chain of narration is authentic (*saheeh*). [A]

[96] **Translator's Note:** The definition of these terms can be found in the glossary at the end of this book.

Other things, they claim, are needed in order to break down and humble the souls, such as craving for garments and other things that the Legislation did not bring.

Some of these things prevent one from the remembrance of Allaah and from prayer, as is the case with singing and looking at the forbidden. So by this, they resemble those who took their Religion as a means of play and amusement.

Beneficial Knowledge and its Fruits:

So from all of these forms of knowledge, the knowledge that is truly beneficial is that in which one grasps the texts of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, understands their meanings, and restricts himself to what has been reported on the Companions, the Taabi'een and their successors (Atbaa'-ut-Taabi'een) concerning the meanings of the Qur'aan and the Hadeeth and what statements were transmitted from them regarding the issues of the lawful and the unlawful, abstinence (*zuhd*), heart-softening narrations (*raqaa'iq*), deeper awareness (*ma'aarif*) and so on.

Striving hard to distinguish what is authentic and what is weak from that is first, followed by striving to stop and comprehend their meanings, second. This is sufficient for anyone with common sense. And it is enough to preoccupy anyone who concerns and busies himself with beneficial knowledge.

So whoever stops at this (level) and makes his intention purely for the sake of Allaah while seeking His help, He will assist him and guide him. And He will grant him success, correctness, understanding and direction. At this point, this knowledge will bear its fruit which is particular for him - and that is fear of Allaah, as He says:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاء

"Verily, it is only those that have knowledge among His slaves that truly fear Allaah." [Surah Faatir: 28]

Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ and others said:

كفى بخشية الله علما وكفى بالاغترار بالله جهلا

"Sufficient as proof for one's knowledge is that he fears Allaah, and sufficient as proof for one's ignorance is that he is misled about Allaah." [97]

And one of the Salaf said:

ليس العلم بكثرة الرواية ولكن العلم الخشية

"Knowledge is not based on excessive relaying of narrations, rather knowledge is fear (of Allaah)."

Another said:

من خشي اللّهَ فهو عالم ومن عصاه فهو جاهل

"Whoever fears Allaah is indeed knowledgeable, whereas whoever disobeys Him is indeed ignorant."

There are many other statements they made that bear this same understanding. The reason for this is because this beneficial knowledge leads to two things:

First: It leads to awareness of Allaah and knowledge of the Perfect Names, Complete Attributes and Superb Actions that befit Him, which necessitate from us that we honor Him, glorify Him, fear Him, be in awe of Him, love Him, hope in Him and rely in Him, as well as be content with His Divine Ordainment and patient with His trials.

Second: It leads to awareness of what Allaah loves and is pleased with as well as what He hates and is displeased with from beliefs, actions – both hidden and apparent – and statements. And this causes anyone who has knowledge of that to hasten towards those things that Allaah loves and is pleased with and to keep far away from those things that He hates and dislikes. If one's knowledge produces these kinds of fruits, then this is (truly) beneficial knowledge.

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[97] Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in *az-Zuhd* (pg. 15), Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (pg. 158), At-Tabaraanee in *al-Kabeer* (9/211-212) and others; Its chain of narration is weak due to the mixing up of Al-Mas'oodee and the break in the chain between Al-Qaasim bin 'Abdir-Rahmaan and Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ, for he did not hear from him. [A]

So when the knowledge is beneficial and becomes established in the heart for the sake of Allaah, the heart submits itself, lowers itself to Him and humbles itself out of admiration, honor, fear, love and glorification for Him. And when the heart submits, lowers and humbles itself, the soul becomes satisfied and content with the slightest and smallest of the world's lawful things. This causes the soul to have complete contentment and to abstain from the worldly life and everything transitory that does not remain like wealth, status and life's pleasures, which in the sight of Allaah detract from a person's share in the Hereafter.

Ibn 'Umar ﷺ and others amongst the Salaf stated this and it was reported on the Prophet in *marfoo'* form.

It also brings about a special understanding between the servant and his Lord, to the point that if he asks Him, He gives him and if he calls Him, He responds, as occurs in the divine narration:

ولا يزال عبدي يتقرب إليَّ بالنوافل حتى
أحبه.....فلئن سألني لأعطينه ولئن استعاذني لأعيذنه

"And My servant continues to draw closer to Me by way of (performing) the *nawaafil* (optional deeds) to the point that I love Him....So if he asks Me, I will surely give Him, and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will surely grant him refuge." [98]

And in one narration, it states:

ولئن دعاني لأجيبنه

"And if he supplicates to Me, I will surely respond to him." [99]

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[98] **Saheeh:** Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (6502) from the narration of Abu Hurairah ﷺ.

[99] **Hasan:** This report is mentioned within a hadeeth from 'Aa'ishah reported by Ahmad (6/256), Ibn Abee Dunyaa in *al-Awliyaa* (45) and Al-Bazzaar as stated in *al-Majma'* (10/269). In its chain is 'Abdul-Waahid bin Qais and there is differing concerning him. Al-Haafidh said in *at-Taqreeb*: "He was honest but had many defects." At-Tabaraanee also reported it in *al-Awsat* as stated in *al-Majma'* (10/269) where Al-Haithamee said: "Its narrators are all of the *Saheeh* standards except for his shaikh, Haaroon bin Kaamil." The hadeeth based on these two reports is sound (*hasan*) and Allaah knows best. [A]

And while counseling Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ, the Prophet ﷺ said:

احفظ الله يحفظك احفظ الله تجده أمامك
تعرف إلى الله في الرخاء يعرفك في الشدة

"Preserve Allaah (by remembering Him) and He will preserve you. Preserve Allaah and you will find Him before you. Familiarize yourself with Allaah in times of ease, He will remember you in times of hardship." [100]

So the matter with respect to the servant is that there exists a special understanding and awareness between him and his Lord in his heart such that he feels Him close to him and takes Him as a companion in times of solitude. He also experiences the sweetness of remembering Him (through *dhikr*), supplicating to Him, talking to Him in private and serving Him. No one experiences this except for he who obeys Him in both private and in open.

This is like when Wuhaib bin Al-Ward[101] was asked: "Do those who disobey (Allaah) experience the sweetness of obedience?" He replied: "No, not even those who intend (to disobey)." [102]

When the servant experiences this, he has truly become aware of his Lord and there has developed a special understanding between him and his Creator. So if he asks Him, He gives him and if he calls on Him, He responds.

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[100] **Hasan:** The hadeeth with this wording was reported by Ahmad (1/307) and Al-Bayhaqee in *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (1/197) as well as in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* (pg. 75-76). Its chain of narration is *hasan*. The great scholar Ahmad Shaakir has spoken about it at length in his verification and comments to *Musnad Ahmad* (4/286). [A] At-Tirmidhee reported the hadeeth in his *Sunan* (2516) without the wording: "**Familiarize yourself with Allaah...**" and Al-Albaanee declared it authentic in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (7957).

[101] He was Abu 'Uthmaan or Abu Umayyah, the brother of 'Abdul-Jabbaar bin Al-Ward, the freed slave of Banu Makhzoom. His real name was 'Abdul-Wahhaab and Wuhaib was a nickname. He was from the worshippers and ascetics and would narrate hadeeth and admonitions. Ibn Hibbaan said about him: "He was from the worshippers and those devoted to abandoning the worldly life." He died in 153H.

[102] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (8/144). [A]

This is like when Shi'waanah said to Fudayl: "Is there not between you and your Lord (a connection by which) if you were to call unto Him, He would respond to you?" So he lost consciousness.

A servant will never cease to fall into hardships and anxieties whether in the worldly life, the Barzakh or the final place of standing. But if there exists a special awareness and understanding between him and his Lord, Allaah will suffice him in all of these situations. This is the point that is being made in the Prophet's ﷺ advice to Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ when he told him: **"Familiarize yourself with Allaah in times of ease, He will remember you in times of hardship."**

It was once said to Ma'roof:[103] "What is it that incites you towards the end?" And then death, the grave, the final standing, Paradise and the Hellfire were mentioned to him, so he said: "Verily, there is a King in whose Hand is (all of) this. If there is an understanding between you and Him, He will suffice you for all of that."

Therefore, beneficial knowledge is that which causes a person to become acquainted with his Lord and that which directs him towards Allaah to the point that He knows his Lord, singles Him out in worship, finds close companionship in Him, feels timid at His nearness and worships Him as if he sees Him. This is why a group amongst the Companions said:

إن أول علم يرفع من الناس الخشوع

"Verily, the first part of knowledge that will be uplifted from mankind is submissiveness (*khushoo'*)."

And Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ said:

إن أقواماً يقرأون القرآن لا يجاوز تراقيهم
ولكن إذا وقع في القلب فرسخ فيه نفع

"There are people that recite the Qur'aan but yet it does not pass their throats. However, if it were to reach the heart and become firmly settled there, it would benefit."

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[103] He was Ma'roof bin Fayrooz Al-Kurkhee, Abu Mahfoodh, one of the illustrious scholars and ascetics. He died in 200H.

Al-Hasan said:

العلم علمان فعلم على اللسان فذلك حجة الله
على ابن آدم و علم في القلب فذلك العلم النافع

"Knowledge is of two types: (1) Knowledge that is on the tongue – This is Allaah's proof against the son of Aadam, and (2) Knowledge that is in the heart - this is beneficial knowledge." [104]

The Salaf would say:

العلماء ثلاثة: عالم بالله عالم بأمر الله و عالم
بالله ليس بعالم بأمره و عالم بأمر الله ليس بعالم بالله

"Scholars are of three types: (1) He who has knowledge of Allaah and knowledge of the Command of Allaah; (2) He who has knowledge of Allaah but no knowledge of the Command of Allaah, and; (3) He who has knowledge of the Command of Allaah but no knowledge of Allaah." [105]

The most complete out of all of them is the first (type) for they are the ones who fear Allaah and know His Laws.

The point of all this is that the servant uses this knowledge as a means to direct him to his Lord, thus becoming aware of Him in the process. And when he becomes aware of his Lord, he feels that He is always close to him. And when he feels that He is close to him, Allaah draws him near to Himself and answers his supplication, as is stated in the narrations of the Israelites: "O son of Aadam, look for Me and you will find Me. And if you find me, you find everything, but if you lose Me, you lose everything. And I am more beloved to you than everything."

Dhun-Noon[106] would constantly repeat these verses at night:

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[104] Reported by Ad-Daarimee (1/102). [A]

[105] Reported by Ad-Daarimee (1/102), Al-Bayhaqee in *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (1/326), Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (7/280) and Ibn 'Abdil-Barr in *al-Jaami'* (2/48) from Sufyaan bin 'Uyainah who said: **"It used to be said: The scholars are three types..."** and its chain of narration is authentic (*saheeh*). [A]

[106] He was Dhun-Noon Abul-Fayd Thawbaan bin Ibraaheem Al-Misree. He was born in 180H in Egypt and traveled to Damascus, Makkah and other places. He died in 246H.

اطلبوا لأنفسكم مثلَ ما وَجَدتُ أنا
قد وَجَدتُ لي سَكَنًا ليسَ في هَواهُ عَنا
إن بَعُدتُ قَرَّبَني أو قَرُبتُ مِنهُ دَنا

"Search for yourselves that which I have found for myself,
I have found for myself tranquility with no anxiety in its realm
If I go far, He draws me near and if I get close to Him, He comes closer."

Imaam Ahmad would say about Ma'roof: "He possesses the foundation of knowledge – fear of Allaah."

So the foundation of knowledge is: Knowledge of Allaah, which causes one to fear Him, love Him, draw near to Him, befriend Him and yearn for Him.

Then what follows after this is knowledge of the Laws of Allaah and what statements, actions, conditions and beliefs He loves and is pleased with His servant possessing. So whoever achieves both of these types of knowledge his knowledge is considered "beneficial knowledge." And the result of this is that he will have beneficial knowledge, a submissive heart, a content soul and a supplication that is answered.

But whoever lacks this beneficial knowledge will fall into the four things that the Prophet ﷺ sought refuge from. His knowledge becomes a burden and a proof against him. So he did not benefit from the knowledge since his heart failed to submit itself to its Lord. And his soul did not find satisfaction with the worldly life – instead it grew in greed and desire for it. And neither was his supplication answered because of his lack of carrying out his Lord's Commands and abstaining from those things He hates and dislikes.

This is assuming that the knowledge he has is the type of knowledge that it is possible to benefit from, and that is knowledge derived from the Qur'aan and Sunnah. However, if it is taken from other than these (two sources), it is neither beneficial in itself nor can one derive benefit from it either. On the contrary, its harm is greater than its benefit.

The Signs of Non-Beneficial Knowledge:
An indicative sign of this non-beneficial knowledge is that it breeds haughtiness, pride and arrogance in the one who possesses it. And it causes him to seek after grandeur and elevation in the worldly life and to compete

for that. It also leads one to pursue competing with the scholars, arguing with the foolish and turning the people's attention his way. And it has been reported that the Prophet ﷺ said that whoever seeks knowledge for these reasons, then **"the Fire, the Fire."** [107]

It could be that some of the people who possess these types of knowledge claim to know Allaah, seek after Him and abstain from everything apart from that, however, their goal behind that is for nothing else but to gain a high place in certain people's hearts, such as that of the rulers and their likes. Perhaps their goal is to have these people think good thoughts about them or to gain large gatherings of followers or to have them venerate them because of that.

Another sign of this is when one openly claims to have a close relationship with Allaah, i.e. claims to be a *walee,* as the People of the Scripture would do, and as the Qaraamitah,[108] Baatiniyyah[109] and their likes would assert for themselves.

This is contrary to what the Salaf were upon for they would constantly belittle and scorn themselves, in hidden and in open. 'Umar ﷺ said:

من قال إنه عالم فهو جاهل ومن قال إنه مؤمن
فهو كافر ومن قال هو في الجنة فهو في النار

"Whoever says he is knowledgeable is really ignorant. And whoever says he is a believer is really a disbeliever. And whoever says he is in Paradise is in the Hellfire."

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[107] **Saheeh:** Reported by Ibn Maajah (254) from the narration of Jaabir bin 'Abdillaah ﷺ and authenticated by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (7370).

[108] **Al-Qaraamitah:** They are one of the deviant factions that emerged from the Raafidah whose adherents follow Abu Sa'eed Bahraam Al-Hanaabee who was the founder of the Qaraamitee belief. They believed that 'Abdullaah bin Al-Haarith Al-Kandee was a prophet and so would worship him. And they have other corrupt beliefs apart from that.

[109] **Al-Baatiniyyah:** This is a name given to a group that splintered from the Isma'eeli Shiites. They believe that the entire Book of Allaah is open to reinterpretation and claim that it cannot be understood in its apparent (literal) form and so as a result they went astray. Their beliefs have influenced the Sufi movement, which claims that all of the Qur'aan has an apparent as well as a hidden meaning.

Also from its signs is that one fails to accept and submit to the truth, and that he acts arrogantly towards those who speak the truth, especially if that person is considered below them in the eyes of the people. Also from its signs is that one persists upon falsehood out of fear that the people's hearts will turn away from him if he openly shows his going back to the truth.

Perhaps these individuals may even openly condemn and belittle themselves with their tongues in front of large gatherings so that people will believe that they are truly humble, thus drawing (their) praises for that. And this is from the most intricate and subtle forms of showing off (riyaa) as indicated by the Taabi'een and the scholars that came after them. Furthermore, their blatant acceptance and receipt of such praise is to such an extent that it negates any honesty or sincerity on their part. This is since a truly honest person fears hypocrisy for himself and dreads the thought of having a bad end, whereas these individuals busy themselves with accepting and consenting to praises.

So based on this, one of the signs that people have beneficial knowledge is that they don't see themselves as having any special position or status, and that they hate with their hearts any commendation or praise and that they do not exalt themselves arrogantly over anyone.

Al-Hasan said:

إنما الفقيه الزاهد في الدنيا الراغب في
الآخرة البصير بدينه المواظب على عبادة ربه

"The Faqeeh (one with understanding of the Religion) is only he who abstains from the worldly life, longs for the next life, has deep insight into his Religion and is persistent in worshipping his Lord." [110]

In another narration, he said:

الذي لا يحسد من فوقه ولا يسخر
ممن دونه ولا يأخذ على علم علَّمَه الله أجرا

[110] Reported by Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (pg. 267), Ad-Daarimee (1/89), Al-Aajurree in *Akhlaaq-ul-'Ulamaa* (pg. 74), and Abu Nu'aim in *Hilyat-ul-Awliyaa* (2/147) and its chain of narration is sound (*hasan*). [A]

"He is one who does not envy those above him, nor does he belittle those below him, nor does he charge any fee for the knowledge that Allaah has given him."

A statement with a similar meaning to this last one was reported on Ibn 'Umar ﷺ as a saying of his.[111] So every time the people who have beneficial knowledge increase in this type of knowledge, they increase in humbleness, fear, lowliness and submission to Allaah.

One of the Salaf said:

ينبغي للعالم أن يضع التراب على رأسه تواضعا لربه

"A person with knowledge should place dirt upon his head out of humbleness to his Lord." [112]

For indeed every time he increases in knowledge and awareness of his Lord, He increases in fear and love for Him as well as submission and debasement towards Him.

The Signs of Beneficial Knowledge:

From the signs that one has beneficial knowledge is that it leads him to flee from the worldly life and its splendors, as well as from leadership, fame and praise. Keeping far away from these things and exerting one's efforts in avoiding them are indications that one has beneficial knowledge. And if he were to fall into committing any of these things unintentionally and unwillingly, he would be in immense fear of being punished for that since he would fear that such (praise or leadership or fame) is perhaps a plot or gradual delusion (before inevitable punishment from Allaah). Such was the case with Imaam Ahmad, for he would fear for himself when his name became famous and his reputation spread.

Also from the signs of beneficial knowledge is that one does not claim to have knowledge nor does he use it to act arrogantly towards anyone, nor does he describe anyone as being ignorant – except for those who oppose the Sunnah and its followers, for in this case, he may speak about them out

[111] Reported by Ad-Daarimee (1/88) as a statement of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ. [A]
[112] Reported by Al-Aajurree in *Akhlaaq-ul-'Ulamaa* (pg. 71 and Al-Khateeb in *al-Faqeeh wal-Mutafaqqih* (2/113) as a statement of Ayoob, and its chain of narration is authentic (*saheeh*). [A]

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of anger for the sake of Allaah and not his own sake nor intending to elevate himself over anyone.

As for the one who does not have beneficial knowledge, his only concern is to use his knowledge to arrogantly elevate himself over people and to manifest the virtue of his knowledge to them while at the same time ascribing them to ignorance. His only concern is to belittle them so that he may exalt himself over them by doing that. This is one of the vilest and most despicable of actions. Perhaps he may even describe those scholars that came before him as being ignorant, negligent and forgetful. So his love for himself and his love for exposing himself leads him to think highly of himself while thinking poorly of those who preceded him!

Those who possess beneficial knowledge are upon the opposite of this, for they think poorly of themselves while thinking highly of those scholars that came before them. And they affirm with their hearts and souls the virtue and superiority that their predecessors have over them and their own inability to reach and attain the levels that they were at, let alone get near to them.

How beautiful was the response of Imaam Abu Haneefah[113] when he was asked about 'Alqamah[114] and Aswad[115] as to which of them was better. He replied saying:

والله ما نحن بأهل أن نذكر هم فكيف نفضل بينهم

"By Allaah, we are not qualified to even mention their names, so how can we choose between them?"

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[113] He was the great Imaam, Abu Haneefah An-Nu'maan bin Thaabit, the Jurist from Iraq. He saw Anas bin Maalik ﷺ on more than one occasion. He was pious, knowledgeable and diligent in performing deeds. Ash-Shaafi'ee said about him: "With regards to Fiqh, the people are dependent upon Abu Haneefah." He died in 150H.

[114] He was 'Alqamah bin Qais bin 'Abdillaah bin Maalik bin 'Alqamah An-Nakha'ee from Koofah, Iraq. He was born during the lifetime of Allaah's Messenger ﷺ but never met him. He was from the major Taabi'een, being the main Jurist and Muhaddith of the people of Iraq. He studied very closely under Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ and spread his knowledge after him, passing rulings and verdicts. He died in 72H and some say in 73H.

[115] He was Al-Aswad bin Yazeed bin Qais An-Nakha'ee from the companions of Ibn Mas'ood ﷺ. His *kunyah* was Abu 'Amr, but he was also called Abu 'Abdir-Rahmaan. He was from the major Taabi'een, reliable and knowledgeable, and he narrated many hadeeth. He passed away in either 74H or 75H.

When the etiquettes of those who preceded would be mentioned, Ibn Al-Mubaarak would recite the following verses of poetry:

لا تُعرض بِذِكرنا مَع ذِكرهِم لَيسَ الصَحيحُ إذا مَشى كَالمُقعَدِ

"Do not present our mention along with their mention,
The healthy one who walks is not like the crippled."

So if this individual with non-beneficial knowledge feels that he is superior to those who came before him in terms of producing elaborate speech and statements, he will then assume that he is also superior to them in knowledge and rank before Allaah, due to his having a special virtue over those who preceded him. This will then lead him to scorn those who came before him (i.e. the Salaf) and audaciously accuse them of having little knowledge. However, this ignoramus doesn't realize that the reason why the Salaf made such few statements was only because of their piety and fear of Allaah. Had they wanted to speak profusely and elaborate themselves through many statements, they would not have been unable to do it.

We have the example of Ibn 'Abbaas ﷺ and what he said to a group of people when he heard them arguing about the Religion: "Don't you know that Allaah has servants who have become silent due to their fear of Allaah and not out of ignorance or dumbness. They are the true scholars, eloquent speakers, distinguished ones and elite. They have knowledge of Allaah's days. However when they remember the greatness of Allaah, their minds lose focus, their hearts rupture and their tongues get cut off to the point that when they regain consciousness, they rush to Allaah through performing pure deeds. They count themselves as being from the heedless. And verily, they are indeed shrewd and strong with the wrongdoers and sinners. They are truly pious and free (from sin). However, they do not exceed in that (i.e. silence) nor are they content with a little of it nor do they indicate it through their actions. Wherever you meet them you will find them concerned, apprehensive, frightened and full of fear." [116]

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[116] Reported by Ibn Al-Mubaarak in *az-Zuhd* (1495), Al-Aajurree in *ash-Sharee'ah* (pg. 59-60) and in *Akhlaaq-ul-'Ulamaa* (pg. 74-76) and Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (1/325); Is chain of narration contains Moosaa bin Abee Diram whom Ibn Abee Haatim mentioned in his book *al-Jarh wat-Ta'deel* (8/142) neither praising or disparaging him. It was also reported through another chain of narration by Ahmad in *az-Zuhd* (pg. 43) and Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (1/325) but its chain of narration contains Idrees bin Sinaan who is weak as stated in *at-Taqreeb*. [A]

Abu Nu'aim and others transmitted this. Imaam Ahmad and At-Tirmidhee reported from Abu Umaamah that the Prophet ﷺ said:

الحياء والعيُّ شعبتان من الإيمان والبذاء والبيان شعبتان من النفاق

"Modesty and reservation (in speech)[117] are two branches from Faith while obscenity and fluency (in expression) are two branches from hypocrisy."[118] At-Tirmidhee deemed this narration sound (*hasan*) and Al-Haakim[119] transmitted it and authenticated it.

Ibn Hibbaan transmitted in his *Saheeh* from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

البيان من الله والعي من الشيطان وليس البيان بكثرة الكلام ولكن
البيان الفصل في الحق وليس العي قلة الكلام ولكن من سفه الحق

"Fluency (in expression) is from Allaah while reservation (in expression) is from the Devil. Fluency is not by excessive speech but rather by being able to discern the truth. And reservation does not mean small amounts of speech but rather it is whoever disregards the truth." [120]

In the *Maraaseel* of Muhammad bin Ka'ab Al-Qurdhee,[121] it is reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

ثلاث ينقص بهن العبد في الدنيا ويزداد بهن في

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[117] **Translator's Note:** The word used here in Arabic is *'iyy*, which has been translated as reservation in speaking, but which more precisely means "silencing the tongue out of precaution from falling into slander" or error, as stated in *Fayd-ul-Qadeer*.

[118] **Saheeh:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (2027) and Ahmad (21809) and declared authentic by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (3201).

[119] He was the great Imaam, Abu 'Abdillaah Muhammad bin 'Abdillaah An-Naisapuree. He was born in 321H and sought knowledge by traveling far in search of it. He compiled the books *al-Mustadrak*, *Taareekh Naisapur* and other works and died in 405H.

[120] **Da'eef:** Reported by Ibn Hibbaan (2010) and its chain of narration is very weak due to 'Utbah bin As-Sakan. Ad-Daaraqutnee said about him: "His hadeeth are rejected" while Al-Bayhaqee said: "He is weak and accused of fabricating." Refer to *Lisaan-ul-Meezaan* (4/128). [A]

[121] He was Muhammad bin Ka'ab bin Saleem bin Asad, Abu Hamzah Al-Qurdhee Al-Madanee. He was born in 40H, according to the correct view, and settled in Koofah, Iraq for a period of time. He was a reliable scholar and died in 120H.

الآخرة ما هو أعظم من ذلك: الرحم والحياء وعي اللسان

"There are **three things by which the servant lowers himself in the worldly life yet through these he will attain what is greater than that in the Hereafter: Kinship, shyness and reservation of the tongue."** [122]

'Awn bin 'Abdillaah[123] said: "Three things are from Faith: Shyness, modesty and reservation – the reservation of the tongue that is, not that of the heart or the actions. This is what increases one in the Hereafter and decreases one in the worldly life. But what he increases in the Hereafter is greater than what he decreases in the worldly life." [124]

This narration was also reported as a saying of the Prophet ﷺ through a weak chain of narration.

Some of the Salaf said that if a man were to sit amongst a group of people and they felt that he had inability (to speak) when in fact he had no inability, this is truly a Muslim *Faqeeh* (one with understanding).

So whoever acknowledges the status of the Salaf knows that their remaining silent and refraining from delving deep into all sorts of speech, excessive argumentation and disputing, and excessive elaboration was not done by them due to their inability (to express themselves) nor due to ignorance or shortcomings on their part. Rather, it was done out of piety and fear of Allaah and because they preoccupied themselves with what was beneficial over what was not beneficial.

This applies to (all of) their speech regardless of whether it is on the subjects of the fundamental issues of the Religion and its subsidiary issues,

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[122] I was not able to find it with this wording, however Al-Bayhaqee reported in *Shu'ab-ul-Eemaan* (7711) that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Shyness, modesty and reservation – the reservation of the tongue not that of the heart and deeds – are from Eemaan (Faith). These are what increase one in the Hereafter and decrease one in the worldly life."** See *Da'eef-ul-Jaami'-us-Sagheer* (2534).

[123] He was Ibn 'Utbah bin Mas'ood Al-Hadhlee, Abu 'Abdillaah, from Koofah, the well-known ascetic. Ahmad, Ibn Ma'een and others deemed him reliable. However, he was accused of committing *Irjaa*. Al-Bukhaaree listed him from amongst those who passed away between 110H and 120H.

[124] Reported by 'Abdur-Razzaaq in *al-Musannaf* (11/142-143) and its chain of narration is authentic [A]

the interpretation of the Qur'aan and Hadeeth, asceticism, heart-softening narrations, points of wisdom and admonition or any of the other things they talked about.

So whoever follows their path, then he is guided. And whoever follows other than their path and enters into excessive questioning, researching, disputing, and he said/she said talk, then he is misguided. But if he acknowledges that they are superior to him and that he is inferior to them, his condition becomes closer to the truth. Iyaas bin Mu'aawiyah[125] said:

ما من أحد لا يعرف عيب نفسه إلا و هو أحمق قيل له فما عيبك قال كثرة الكلام

"There is no one that is not aware of the defects found in himself except that he is unintelligent." It was said to him: "So what then is your defect?" He replied: "Excessive speech." [126]

So if someone claims that he is superior to those who came before him, and that his predecessors are inferior and ignorant, then such a person has clearly gone astray and fallen into manifest loss.

To summarize: In these corrupt times of ours a person is either content with himself being a scholar in the sight of Allaah or not content with himself unless he is (considered) a scholar in the eyes of the people of his time.

If he is content with the first, then the knowledge of Allaah that he has in him is sufficient for him. And whoever has an understanding between him and Allaah, his awareness of Allaah will suffice him.

But whoever is not content unless he is considered a scholar in the eyes of the people, he falls under the statement of the Prophet ﷺ:

من طلب العلم ليباهي به العلماء أو يماري به السفهاء
أو يصرف به وجوه الناس إليه فليتبوأ مقعده من النار

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[125] He was Abu Waa'ilah Iyaas bin Mu'aawiyah from Basrah, Iraq, where he served as a judge. His grandfather was a Companion of Allaah's Messenger ﷺ.
[126] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (3/124) with an unproblematic chain of narration. [A]

"Whoever **seeks knowledge in order to compete with the scholars, to argue with the foolish or to turn the people's faces towards him, then let him find his seat in the Hellfire."** [127]

Wuhaib bin Al-Ward said:

رب عالم يقول له الناس عالم وهو معدود عند الله من الجاهلين

"Perhaps there may be a person whom the people call a scholar yet in the sight of Allaah he is counted as one of the ignorant." [128]

It is reported in *Saheeh Muslim* from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إن أول من تسعر به النار ثلاثة أحدهم من قرأ القرآن وتعلم العلم ليقال هو قارىء وهو عالم ويقال له قد قيل ذلك ثم أمر به فيسحب على وجهه حتى ألقي في النار

"The first **people for whom the Hellfire will be kindled are three: The first of them is one who recited the Qur'aan and taught knowledge so that it could be said he is a reciter or a scholar. It will be said: 'And such was said about you.' Then someone will be put in charge of him and he will be dragged upon his face until he is thrown into the Hellfire."** [129]

But if one's soul is not satisfied until it reaches the level of being able to judge between people – since the people of that time do not revere or regard anyone who is not like this, then he has exchanged that which is lower for that which is better. And he has transferred from the level of the scholars to the level of the tyrants.

This is why when one of the Salaf was sought after for a judicial position, he declined saying:

إنما تعلمت العلم لأحشر به مع الأنبياء لا مع الملوك

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[127] **Hasan:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (2654) from the narration of Ka'ab bin Maalik ﷺ and Ibn Maajah (253) from the narration of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ; Al-Albaanee deemed it sound (*hasan*) in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami'* (6382 and 6383).

[128] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (8/157) and its chain of narration is weak (*da'eef*) due to 'Ubaydullaah bin Muhammad bin Yazeed. [A]

[129] **Saheeh:** Reported by Muslim (1905), Ahmad (2/321) and An-Nasaa'ee (6/23).

فإن العلماء يحشرون مع الأنبياء والقضاة يحشرون مع الملوك

"I only acquired knowledge so that I may be raised by it (on the Day of Judgement) with the scholars and not the kings. This is since the scholars will be raised with the prophets while the judges will be raised with the kings."

So no doubt the believer must have a little patience in order to eventually reach a long break (in the Hereafter). But if he becomes anxious and loses patience then he is as Ibn Al-Mubaarak said:

من صبر فما أقل ما يصبر ومن جزع فما أقل ما يتمتع

"Whoever is patient, then how brief is the time in which he is patient, and whoever is anxious then how brief is the time in which he enjoys."

Imaam Ash-Shaafi'ee, may Allaah have mercy on him, would recite the following poem:

يانفسُ ما هِيَ إلّا صَبرُ أيّام كَأنَّ مُدَّتَها أضغاثُ أحلام
يانَفسُ جوزي عَن الدُنيا مُبادِرَةً وَخَلِّ عَنها فَإنَّ العَيشَ قُدامي

"O my soul, it is nothing more than patience for a few days,
As if its length is only like that of a strange dream,
O my soul, forego the worldly life without delay,
And abandon it for indeed the (true) life is before me."

So we ask Allaah to grant us beneficial knowledge. And we seek refuge in Him from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not submit, from a soul that is not satisfied, and from a supplication that is not heard. O Allaah, we indeed seek refuge in You from these four things.

All praise is due to Allaah, Lord of all that exists and may His peace and praises be upon our teacher, Muhammad, as well as all of his family and Companions.

Addendum: ON the Hardening of the Heart

One should reflect on why Allaah condemned the People of the Scripture for the hardening of their hearts after they were given the Book and for their witnessing the signs such as the murdered man that was brought back to life as mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah, and then realize why we were forbidden from imitating them in that, where Allaah says to us:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

"Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allaah's Reminder and that which has been revealed from the truth, lest they become like those who received the Scripture from before, and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts became hardened? And many of them were disobedient sinners." [Surah Al-Hadeed: 16]

In another place, He clarifies the cause for the hardening of their hearts, saying:

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً

"So because they breached their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts become hard." [Surah Al-Maa'idah: 13]

So He informs us that the hardening of their hearts was their punishment for breaking the covenant they made with Allaah, which was manifested in their opposing His commandments and committing His prohibitions after they had made a pact with Allaah that they would not do that.

Allaah then goes on to say:

يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ

"They distort the words from their proper places and have forgotten a good portion of the Message that was sent to them." [Surah Al-Maa'idah: 13]

So He mentions that the hardening of their hearts brought about two condemnable things for them:

First: Distorting words from their proper place.

Second: They forgot a good portion of the Message that was sent to them.

What is meant by this is that they abandoned and neglected a good amount of the wisdom and fair admonition that they had received as revelation. So they forgot that and hence left off acting on it in total disregard. These two things can be found in those amongst our scholars that became corrupt due to their resembling the People of the Scripture.

First: Distorting the Words:
Whoever acquires knowledge for a purpose other than to act on it, his heart will become hardened. So he does not concern himself with acting (on the knowledge). Rather, his only concern is to distort and change the words and phrases of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah from their correct and proper meanings and to go about doing this by using various subtle methods such as understanding these words based on their impractical figurative linguistic meanings.

They also go about doing this by criticizing the wording of narrations found in the Sunnah since they are not able to criticize the wording found in the Qur'aan. Furthermore, they condemn those who stick to the texts and apply them according to what is understood from them, calling them such names as "ignorant" and "simpleton."

This can be found in those who speak about the principles of the religions as well as in the jurisprudent proponents of opinion, the Sufi philosophers and the people of rhetoric.

Second: Forgetting a Good Amount of the Message:
They forgot a substantial amount of the beneficial knowledge they received, and so as a result their hearts were immune to any admonition. Rather, they would condemn anyone that taught things that made people cry and their hearts soften, labeling him a "story-teller."

In their books, the people of opinion quoted some of their teachers as saying: "The fruits that knowledge produces prove its nobility." So

(according to them) whoever preoccupies himself with Tafseer, his main objective is to (just) narrate stories to the people and remind them. And whoever preoccupies himself with their opinions and knowledge, he should (only) issue verdicts, pass judgments, give rulings and teach. These people have a share of those who:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

"only know the **outside appearance of the life of the world, whereas they are heedless about the Hereafter.**" [Surah Ar-Room: 7]

What caused them to do this was their intense love for the worldly life and its splendor. But if they were to abstain from the worldly life and instead desire the Hereafter and be sincere to themselves and to the servants of Allaah, they would adhere to what Allaah revealed to His Messenger and they would oblige the people to do the same. So at this point, most of them would not leave from the fold of Taqwaa (dutifulness to Allaah). And whatever is found in the texts of the Qur'aan and the Sunnah would suffice them, so those amongst them who would leave from its fold would then be very few.

And Allaah would send one who understands those meanings of the texts that serve to refute those who fail to abide by them to return to the texts. And that would suffice him over what they introduced from false subsidiary issues and unlawful schemes which cause the doors of usury and other unlawful things to become open, and for which reason the things that Allaah forbade became permissible due to the slightest of these schemes, as was done by the People of the Scripture.

And Allaah guides those who believe in those issues that are differed on as regards to the truth by His leave, and Allaah guides whom He wills to a Straight Path.

May Allaah send His peace and praises to our teacher, Muhammad, as well as his family and all of his Companions up to the Day of Recompense. Allaah is sufficient for us and the best of guardians.

[End of the Treatise]

ذم قسوة القلب

A Condemnation of the Hardening of the Heart

أبي الفرج زين الدين عبد الرحمن بن أحمد
الشهير بابن رجب البغدادي الحنبلي

By Imaam Abul-Faraj Zayn-ud-Deen
'Abdur-Rahmaan bin Ahmad, better known as,
Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee [D. 795H]

With Verification and Notes by Naasir An-Najjaar

Introduction to the Treatise

All praise is due to Allaah. This is an essay condemning the hardening of the heart as well as mentioning its causes and cures.

As for the proofs that condemn this hardening of the heart, Allaah says:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم مِّن بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً

"Then your hearts became hardened after that till they became like stones or harder than that." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 74]

Then He explains the manner in which they can be harder than stones, saying:

وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا
يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاء وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللهِ

"For indeed there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down out of fear of Allaah." [Surah Al-Baqarah: 74]

And Allaah says:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ
وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ

"Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allaah's Reminder and that which has been revealed of the truth, lest they become like those who received the Scripture before and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts became hardened." [Surah Al-Hadeed: 16]

And He says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

"Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the Remembrance of Allaah. They are in manifest error." [Surah Az-Zumar: 22]

In these verses, Allaah has described the people of the Scripture (i.e. Jews and Christians) as having hardened hearts, and He has forbidden us from being like them. One of the Salaf said: "No one can possess a harder heart than that of the People of the Scripture, if his heart should become hard."

At-Tirmidhee reported from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"Do not speak too much without remembering Allaah, for indeed speaking too much without remembering Allaah hardens the heart. And indeed the farthest of people from Allaah is he who has a hard heart."** [130]

It is also reported in the *Musnad* of Al-Bazzaar from Anas ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Four things are from (the signs of) failure: Apathy of the eyes, hardness of the heart, far-fetched hopes, and greediness for the worldly life."**

Ibn Al-Jawzee mentioned this in *al-Mawdoo'aat* (Fabricated Narrations) from the path of Abu Dawood An-Nakha'ee, the great liar, from Ishaaq bin 'Abdillaah bin Abee Talhah from Anas ﷺ.

Maalik bin Deenaar said: "No servant is hit by a punishment greater than the hardening of the heart." 'Abdullaah bin Ahmad mentioned this in his book *az-Zuhd*. [131]

Hudhaifah Al-Mir'ashee said: "No one is struck with a calamity greater than the hardening of his heart." This was reported by Abu Nu'aim. [132]

The Causes for the Hardening of the Heart:
As for the causes of the hardening of heart, then they are many:

1. One of them is: Speaking too much without remembering Allaah, as stated in the previous hadeeth of Ibn 'Umar ﷺ.

2. Another is: Breaking the covenant one has made with Allaah, as He says:

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[130] **Da'eef:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (2523 & 2524) with a weak chain of narration.
[131] See *az-Zuhd* (320)
[132] See *al-Hilyah* (8/269)

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَاقَهُمْ لَعنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً

"So because **they breached their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts become hard."** [Surah Al-Maa'idah: 13]

Ibn 'Aqeel said one day during his admonition: "O you who finds hardness in his heart, beware of having broken a covenant for indeed Allaah has said: **'So because they breached their covenant...'"**

3. Another cause is: Excessive laughing. At-Tirmidhee reported from Al-Hasan from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Do not laugh too much, for indeed too much laughing causes the heart to die."** [133]

This statement has also been reported as a saying of Al-Hasan.

Ibn Maajah transmitted through the path of Abu Rajaa Al-Jazaree from Bard bin Sinaan from Mak'hool from Waa'ilah bin Al-Asqa' from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said: **"Too much laughing causes the heart to die."** [134]

It was also reported through the path of Ibraaheem bin 'Abdillaah bin Hunain from Abu Hurairah ﷺ on the Prophet ﷺ.

4. Another cause is: Too much eating, especially if the food being eaten is from the doubtful or unlawful types.

Bishr bin Al-Haarith said: "There are two things that harden the heart – excessive speech and excessive eating." Abu Nu'aim mentioned this.

Al-Maroodhee mentioned in his book *al-Wara'*: "I said to Abu 'Abdillaah – i.e. Ahmad bin Hanbal: 'Can a man feel softness in his heart while his stomach is full?' He replied: 'No.'"

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[133] **Saheeh:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (2305), Ahmad (2/310), Al-Bayhaqee in *ash-Shu'ab* (9543), Abu Ya'laa in his *Musnad* (6240) and others with a weak chain of narration, However, the hadeeth was also reported by Al-Bukhaaree in *al-Adab-ul-Mufrad* (252), Ibn Maajah (4217) and others through the chain of Bard bin Sinaan from Mak'hool from Waa'ilah bin Al-Asqa' from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in *marfoo'* form and authenticated by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Adab-ul-Mufrad* (190).

[134] **Saheeh:** Reported by Ibn Maajah (4217) and it is authentic based on the above.

5. Another cause is: Excessive sinning, Allaah says:

كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِم مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts because of what they used to earn (from sin)." [Surah Al-Mutaffifeen: 14]

It is reported in the *Musnad* and (the *Sunan* of) At-Tirmidhee from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Verily, when a believer commits a sin, it becomes a black speck in his heart. But if he repents, refrains from (that sin) and asks (Allaah) for forgiveness, his heart is cleansed (of the speck). And if he continues (in committing that sin), the speck increases until it completely covers his heart. This is the stain that Allaah mentions in His Book (when He says): 'No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts because of what they used to earn (from sin).'"**

At-Tirmidhee said it was authentic. [135]

One of the Salaf said: "When the body is naked, it becomes softened. Likewise, the heart – when its transgressions are few, it hastens to tears."

Similarly Ibn Al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy on him, would say:

"I saw that sins cause the hearts to die
And that excessively committing them breeds lowliness
Whereas, abandoning sins brings life to the hearts,
And refusing to do them is better for you."

The Cures for the Hardening of the Heart:
As for the things that remove hardness from the heart, then they too are numerous:

1. Amongst them is: Excessively remembering Allaah with the heart and tongue synonymously.

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[135] **Hasan:** Reported by At-Tirmidhee (3334), An-Nasaa'ee in *al-Kubraa* (6/110), Ibn Maajah (4244), Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (2/297), At-Tabaree in his *Tafseer* (30/88), and Al-Haakim in *al-Mustadrak* (2/562) from the path of Ibn 'Ajlaan from Al-Qa'qaa' bin Hakeem from Abu Saalih from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in *marfoo'* form. Al-Haakim said it was authentic according to the standards of Muslim. Ahmad Shaakir authenticated it in his verification of the *Musnad*. However the hadeeth is *hasan* due to Ibn 'Ajlaan.

Al-Mu'allaa bin Ziyaad said: "A man once told Al-Hasan: 'O Abu Sa'eed, I complain to you about the hardness of my heart.' So he told him: 'Bring it near to the remembrance (of Allaah).'"

And Wuhaib bin Al-Ward said: "We investigated into this Hadeeth, but we did not find anything more capable of softening these hearts nor more able to draw out the truth than reciting the Qur'aan – for those who reflect on it."

Yahyaa bin Mu'aadh and Ibraaheem Al-Khawwaas said: "The cure for hearts lies in five things: (1) Reciting the Qur'aan with contemplation (on its meanings); (2) Emptiness of the stomach; (3) Performing the Night Prayer; (4) Supplicating to Allaah humbly at dawn; and (5) Gathering with the righteous people."

The basis for the removal of hardness from the hearts by remembering Allaah can be found in Allaah's saying:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"Those who **believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the Remembrance of Allaah. Verily, in the Remembrance of Allaah do hearts find tranquility.**" [Surah Ar-Ra'ad: 28]

And Allaah says:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ
جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

"Allaah has sent down **the Best Statement, a Book – its parts resembling each other and oft-repeated. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver** from it (i.e. the Qur'aan). **Then their skins and hearts soften to the Remembrance of Allaah.**" [Surah Az-Zumar: 23]

And He says:

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

"Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe to be affected by Allaah's Reminder and that which has been revealed from the truth." [Surah Al-Hadeed: 16]

In a *mursal* narration of 'Abdul-'Azeez bin Abee Rawwaad, he reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Indeed, these hearts become rusty just as iron becomes rusty."** It was said to him: "So what is their polish, O Messenger of Allaah?" He ﷺ replied: **"Reciting the Book of Allaah and remembering Him much."** [136]

2. Another thing that removes hardness from hearts is: Showing kindness and generosity to the orphans and the needy.

Ibn Abee Dunyaa reported: 'Alee bin Al-Ja'ad narrated: Hammaad bin Salamah narrated to me from Abu 'Imraan Al-Jawnee from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that: "A man once complained to Allaah's Messenger about the hardness of his heart, so he said: **'If you would like your heart to be soft, then wipe (i.e. wash) the head of the orphan and feed the needy.'"** Its chain of narration is good. [137]

Ibn Mahdee reported a similar narration on Hammaad bin Salamah.

Abu Nu'aim reported from the path of 'Abdur-Razzaaq from Mu'ammar who reported from one of his companions that Abud-Dardaa once wrote to Salmaan saying: "Be merciful to the orphan, draw him near to you and feed him from your own food, for indeed once when a man came to the

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[136] **Da'eef:** Reported by Al-Qadaa'ee in *Musnad-ush-Shihaab* (178-1179), Ibn 'Adiyy in *al-Kaamil* (1/529), Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (8/197), Al-Khateeb in *at-Taareekh* (11/85), Al-Bayhaqee in *ash-Shu'ab* (2014) and Ibn Al-Jawzee in *al-'Ilal-al-Mutanaahiyah* (2/832) from the path of 'Abdul-'Azeez bin Abee Rawwaad from Naafi' from Ibn 'Umar ﷺ in *marfoo'* form with a weak chain of narration.

[137] **Da'eef:** Reported by Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (2/263), 'Abd bin Humaid in his *Musnad* (1426), and Al-Bayhaqee in *al-Kubraa* (4/60) and in *ash-Shu'ab* (11034) from the paths of Hammaad bin Salamah from Abu 'Imraan Al-Jawnee from a man from Abu Hurairah ﷺ in *marfoo'* form. This chain of narration is weak due to the obscurity of who Abu 'Imraan's teacher is. Ahmad also reported it (2/387) saying: Bahz narrated to us from Hammaad bin Salamah from Abu 'Imraan from Abu Hurairah ﷺ and then he mentioned it without the wording: "**If you would like your heart to be soft...**" Shaikh Al-Albaanee, may Allaah have mercy on him, said: "On the outside, it appears that this chain of narration is authentic, however the first chain weakens it and reveals that there is some unnamed man in between Abu 'Imraan and Abu Hurairah ﷺ.

Messenger of Allaah ﷺ complaining about the hardness of his heart, I heard him ﷺ say: **'Would you like your heart to be softened?'** He replied: 'Yes.' So he ﷺ said: **'Draw the orphan near to you, wipe (i.e. wash) his head, and feed him from your own food, for that will soften your heart and you will be able to complete your needs.'"** [138]

Abu Taalib reported that a man once asked Abu 'Abdillaah, i.e. Ahmad bin Hanbal: "How can my heart become soft." He said: "Enter the graveyard and wipe (i.e. wash) the head of the orphan."

3. Another thing is: Excessive remembrance of death.

Ibn Abee Dunyaa reported with a chain of narration from Mansoor bin 'Abdir-Rahmaan from Safiyyah that: "A woman went to 'Aa'ishah, may Allaah be pleased with her, to complain about the hardness of her heart, so she told her: 'Remember death a lot. Your heart will become soft and you will be able to fulfill your needs.' So the woman did that and felt her heart was set straight, so she went back to thank 'Aa'ishah."

Several amongst the Salaf including Sa'eed bin Jubair and Rabee' bin Abee Raashid would say: "If the remembrance of death were to separate from our hearts for just one hour, our hearts would become corrupt."

It is reported in the *Sunan* that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Intensify your remembrance of the demolisher of delights."**[139] Meaning: Death.

It has also been reported in *mursal* form from 'Ataa Al-Khurasaanee that: 'The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ passed by a gathering in which the people were overwhelmed by laughing, so he said to them: **'Mix your gathering with the remembrance of that which ruins the pleasures.'** They asked: 'What is it that ruins the pleasures, O Messenger of Allaah?' He ﷺ said: 'Death.'" [140]

4. Another thing is: Visiting the graves in order to reflect on the condition of those buried in them and to ponder on their fate. We already mentioned the statement of Imaam Ahmad when someone asked him what causes the hearts to become soft and his response: "Enter the graveyard."

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[138] Reported by Abu Nu'aim in *al-Hilyah* (1/214).
[139] Saheeh: An authentic hadeeth reported by At-Tirmidhee in his *Sunan* (2307).
[140] Da'eef: Its chain of narration is weak due to the *irsaal*.

It is authentically reported in *Saheeh Muslim* from Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"Visit the graves, for indeed they remind (one) about death."** [141]

Buraidah ﷺ reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"I used to forbid you from visiting the graves, but (now) visit them, for indeed they serve as a reminder for the Hereafter."** This was reported by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhee who authenticated it. [142]

Anas reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **"I used to forbid you from visiting the graves, then it became clear to me that they soften the hearts, bring tears to the eyes and serve as a reminder for the Hereafter. So visit them and do not say that it should be abandoned."** [143]

Ibn Abee Dunyaa mentioned that Muhammad bin Saalih At-Tamaar said: "Safwaan bin Saleem would come to Al-Baqee' (graveyard) during the days and he would pass by me. One day I decided to follow him and said to myself: 'By Allaah, I will look at what he does.' So (I saw that) he covered his head with a cloth, sat by one of its graves and continued to cry until I felt sorry for him. I assumed it was the grave of one of his family members.

On another occasion, he passed by me again and I followed him. This time he sat by the grave of someone else and did the same thing. I mentioned this to Muhammad bin Al-Munkadar, saying to him: 'I assumed it was the grave of one of his family members.' So Muhammad said: 'All of them are his family and brothers. He is just a man whose heart is moved by remembering the deceased every time hardness (of the heart) presents itself to him.' Afterward, Muhammad bin Al-Munkadar would start to pass by me on his way to Al-Baqee' Cemetery. So one day I greeted him and he said to me: 'Didn't the exhortation of Safwaan benefit you?' So I saw that he learned from the story I told him."

He (Ibn Abee Dunyaa) also mentioned the story of an old pious woman from 'Abdul-Qais who was ardent at worshipping and who would always go to visit the graveyard. Once when she was reprimanded for doing that, she said: "Verily, when the hardened heart becomes dry, nothing can moisten it except for the sight of tragic images. When I go to visit the graves

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[141] **Saheeh:** Reported by Muslim (976).
[142] **Saheeh:** Reported by Muslim (1977), Ahmad (5/356-359) and At-Tirmidhee (1054).
[143] Reported by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/237-250).

I feel as if I am looking at them while they have emerged from their tombs, and it is as if I am looking at their dust-covered faces, their decomposed bodies and their dirty shrouds. So what a sight which their hearts would not be pleased with seeing! There is nothing more disciplinary upon the hearts of the souls nor more severe upon the debasement of the bodies than that."

Ziyaad An-Numairee said: "I never longed for crying except that I passed by it." A man said to him: "How did you do that?" He said: "Whenever I wanted to do that, I would go out to the graveyard and sit by some of the graves. Then I would think about the trials they went through and remember the extended time that we have now. So at that point all my misfortunes seem trivial to me!"

5. Another thing that removes the hardness from the heart is: Looking at the dwellings of those who were destroyed and contemplating by the homes of those who passed away.

Ibn Abee Dunyaa reported in his book *at-Tafakkur wal-'Itibaar* with a chain of narration on 'Umar bin Saleem Al-Baahilee from Abul-Waleed that he said: "Whenever Ibn 'Umar ﷺ wanted to preserve his heart, he would go to the ruins and stand by its door, calling out in a sad voice, saying: 'Where are your inhabitants?' Then he would go back to himself and say: 'Everything will perish except His (Allaah's) Face.'"

He also reported in his book *al-Quboor* with a chain of narration connected to Muhammad bin Qudaamah who said: "Whenever Ar-Rabee' bin Khuthaim felt hardness in his heart, he would go at night to the house of a friend of his that had passed away and call out: 'O so and so, son of so and so!' Then he would say: 'I wish I knew what you did and what happened to you!' Then he would cry to the point that his tears would flow."

6. Another cure for removing hardness from the heart is: Eating the Lawful.

Abu Nu'aim and others reported from the path of 'Umar bin Saalih At-Tarsoosee that he said: "I and Yahyaa Al-Jalaa went to visit Abu 'Abdillaah Ahmad bin Hanbal while Bawraan and Zuhair Al-Jamaal were next to him. I asked him: 'May Allaah have mercy on you, O Abu 'Abdillaah, what causes the hearts to become softened?' He looked at his companions and winked at them with his eye, then lowered his head in silence for a while.

Then he raised his head and said: 'O my child, by eating the lawful (*Halaal*).' I then passed by Abu Nasr Bishr bin Al-Haarith later that day and said to him: 'O Abu Nasr, what causes the hearts to become softened?' He replied: **'Verily in the Remembrance of Allaah do the hearts find tranquility.'** I said: 'I just came from Abu 'Abdillaah.' So he said: 'What did Abu 'Abdillaah tell you?' I said: 'He told me that it is by eating the Lawful.' So he replied: 'He has gone to the source. He has gone to the source.'

I then passed by 'Abdul-Wahhaab Al-Warraaq and said to him: 'O Abul-Hasan, what causes the hearts to become softened?' He replied: **'Verily in the Remembrance of Allaah do the hearts find tranquility.'** I said: 'I just came from Abu 'Abdillaah.' Upon hearing this, his cheeks became red due to joy and he said to me: 'What did Abu 'Abdillaah tell you?' I said: 'He told me that it is by eating the Lawful.' So he replied: 'He has given you the essence. He has given you the essence – The source of all sources!'"

And all praise is due to only Allaah.

[End of the Treatise]

Glossary of Terms Used in the Book

Da'eef — Lit. Weak – A narration that doesn't meet the conditions and standards of a Saheeh or Hasan narration.

Hadeeth — Lit. Speech – A textual recorded narration containing information about one of the Prophet's sayings, actions or tacit approval of something. Such a report can either be authentic or weak, according to the grading and verification of the Muslim scholars. Plural: Ahaadeeth

Hasan — Lit. Good – A sound narration that is of a lesser standing than a Saheeh narration due to there being a lesser standard of precision on the part of some of the narrators in the chain than that of a Saheeh narration.

Hulool — Lit. Entering – The belief that Allaah dwells within a particular human, i.e. incarnate within him, such as a Sufi shaikh, a prophet, etc.

Irsaal — See Mursal

Islaam — Lit. Submission – The only true religion that Allaah has mandated upon mankind, and which He will accept on the Day of Judgement. The pure and correct form of Islaam is defined by the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, according to the practical understanding of the first three righteous generations of Muslims: The Sahaabah (Companions of the Prophet), the Taabi'een (Successors to the Companions), and the Atbaa' at-Taabi'een (Followers of the Successors).

Isnaad — It is also referred to as "*sanad*." This is the chain of narrators in a hadeeth who have transmitted that particular hadeeth to us.

Marfoo' — Lit. Raised – A report that has been "raised" or ascribed to the Prophet. It is divided into two categories: *Marfoo' Sareeh*, which is a statement, action, tacit approval, or physical characteristic ascribed to the Prophet; and *Marfoo' Hukm*, which is a report containing a ruling ascribed to the Prophet.

Mawdoo'	Lit. Fabricated – A false narration that is ascribed to the Prophet. Such reports are rejected. It is not permissible to mention them unless one desires to expose them and warn against them.
Mawqoof	Lit. Stopped – A narration that is attributed to a Companion, and which cannot be authentically "raised" to a saying of the Prophet.
Mursal	A narration that a Sahaabee (Companion) or a Taabi'ee (Successor) raised, i.e. ascribed, to the Prophet but yet did not hear it directly from him.
Saheeh	Lit. Correct/Authentic – A grading term for a narration that is authentically attributed to the Prophet.
Salaf	Lit. Predecessors – This refers to the first three generations of Islaam: The Sahaabah, the Taabi'een, and the Atbaa' at-Taabi'een. These were the first three virtuous generations of Islaam about whom the Prophet said: "**The best of people is my generation, then those that come after them, then those that come after them.**"
Surah	Pl. Suwar. A chapter from the Noble Qur'aan.
Sunnah	Lit. Way – The way and guidance of Prophet Muhammad, as represented in his speech, action, and tacit approval, which have been recorded and transmitted in reports known as Hadeeth.
Tadlees	The quoting of a hadeeth with its chain of narration which leads one to believe that it is greater than what it really is. It is divided into two types: *Tadlees-ul-Isnaad* and *Tadlees-ush-Shuyookh.*
Wahdat-ul-Wujood	Lit. Unity of Existence – The belief that all existence is a single existence and that everything we see is only aspects of Allaah's Essence.

فَضْلُ عِلْمِ السَّلَفِ عَلَى عِلْمِ الخَلَفِ

The Superiority Of
The Knowledge Of the Predecessors
Over the Knowledge Of the Successors

About the Book:

This is the third book in the "**Classical Knowledge Series**" which is a collection of works written by the scholars of the past on the virtues, etiquettes and aspects of knowledge. This particular book "*Fadlu 'Ilm-is-Salaf 'alaa 'Ilm-il-Khalaf*" written by the great scholar, Ibn Rajab, is one of the well known works authored on the subject.

In spite of its small size, the treatise brings to light many amazing and intricate points of benefit with regard to knowledge and discerning between which of its types are beneficial and which are non-beneficial. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ praised some forms of knowledge while condemning others. And at times he would ask Allaah to grant him beneficial knowledge while at other times he would seek refuge in Him from non-beneficial knowledge.

It is for this reason that the author took on the task of clarifying the various types, characteristics, signs and consequences of both beneficial and non-beneficial knowledge in this short treatise, as well as affirming the superiority of the knowledge of the predecessors (*Salaf*) over the knowledge of their successors (*Khalaf*).

About the Author:

Al-Haafidh Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbalee was one of the great scholars of the 8th century. He is well known today for the legacy of monumental works that he left behind him such as his explanation of Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree, his explanation of An-Nawawee's Forty Hadeeth and scores of other treatises, including this one which reveals his pure Creed, upright methodology and sound knowledge.